

g urges Arab action to help Iraqis

RO (AP) — His Majesty King Hussein has urged Arab governments to support his plans for bringing political change in Iraq and warned that without such change the beleaguered country could disintegrate. In an interview with the London-based weekly Al Wasat, the King said Iraq's fragmentation "will have grave consequences on the entire region." "We are warning Iraqis and Arabs that Iraq is practically divided, and they have to work as fast as they can to prevent this," he said in an interview to be published Monday that was made available to the Associated Press. King Hussein said he had tried but failed to convince the Iraqi leadership to talk to the opposition. He renewed his appeal to the Iraqi regime's opponents to join ranks to "safeguard Iraq through a dialogue to find a satisfactory formula for their country." In the interview, King Hussein insisted Iraq's future should be left for the Iraqis to decide.

Jordan Times

An independent press foundation
جوردان تايمز يومية مستقلة عن المؤسسة الصحفية الأردنية - الراي.

Merry Christmas

THE JORDAN TIMES will not be published on Tuesday, Dec. 26, due to the Christmas holiday on Monday. The next issue of the paper will appear on Wednesday Dec. 27. The editor and staff of the Jordan Times wish the paper's readers and advertisers a Merry Christmas.

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King receives message from Saleh

AMMAN (Petra) — His Majesty King Hussein on Sunday received a message from Yemeni President Ali Abdullah Saleh dealing with bilateral relations. The message was delivered to King Hussein by the visiting Yemeni Minister of Legal and Parliamentary Affairs Abdullah Ahmad Ghanem, during an audience at Al Nadwa Palace. Mr. Ghanem briefed King Hussein on the latest developments of the Eritrean-Yemeni conflict over the Red Sea Island Hainish.

Israeli soldiers abandon post

TEL AVIV (AP) — Israeli paratroopers stationed on the Lebanon border abandoned their outpost as the result of a dispute with their commanders, the army confirmed Sunday. A group of 35 soldiers from an elite paratroop unit complained that their commanders were ignoring their advice and treating them like raw recruits instead of experienced fighters. According to the daily Yediot Ahronot, the soldiers walked about half a kilometre from the base before high-ranking officers caught up with them and ordered them to return. The army spokesman's office confirmed that the soldiers left their post because of "grave complaints" against their commanders. They left one soldier in charge of the base.

Militiaman killed in Lebanon

MARJAYOUN, Lebanon (AFP) — Gunmen on Sunday killed a militiaman with the Israeli-backed South Lebanon Army (SLA) and wounded a Lebanese civilian in an attack in southern Lebanon. SLA officials said. The attack took place near Jezzeine, the main town in the Israeli-occupied strip in southern Lebanon.

Israeli soldier shot in Gaza

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (R) — Palestinian guerrillas in the self-ruled Gaza Strip on Sunday shot and wounded an Israeli soldier who was on a border patrol inside Israel, senior military sources said. The sources said he was in fair condition. They said it happened in the north of the Gaza Strip, handed over to Palestinian self-rule by Israel in mid-1994 under a peace deal with the PLO. "An Israeli force patrolling the border system encountered a number of terrorists who fired at them from inside the autonomous area. The force returned fire at the terrorists," one of the sources said.

5 Egyptian deputies under investigation

CAIRO (AFP) — Prosecutors will begin investigations into five members of parliament suspected of involvement in the murder of three people and defrauding banks of over \$110 million, officials said on Sunday. Parliament on Saturday refused a justice ministry request to lift their immunity from prosecution, but did allow them to be questioned, an official in the parliament's legal committee said.

Report claims Iraq hides Scuds near border

KUWAIT (R) — An Iraqi air force captain who defected to Kuwait told interrogators that Baghdad had moved eight Scud missile batteries to underground storage close to Kuwait's northern border, a newspaper said on Sunday. "The defected captain said Iraq moved eight Scud missile batteries to Basra (in southern Iraq) in May," Al Seyassah newspaper quoted informed sources as saying. Kuwaiti security officials had no immediate comment.

Bethlehem marks Christmas, freedom

BETHLEHEM (R) — Palestinians hailed both the start of Christmas and freedom from Israeli occupation on Sunday, cheering the arrival of the Latin Patriarch of the Holy Land while church bells pealed.

After 28 years of occupation, Israel handed over Bethlehem, the traditional birthplace of Jesus, on Thursday to PLO leader Yasser Arafat, who celebrated with thousands of residents and pilgrims and called Christ a Palestinian.

"It is upon this message of peace and love that a new Palestinian freedom could be built and not on the external manifestations and celebrations of Christmas," Patriarch Michel Sabbah said on leaving his home in Jerusalem for Bethlehem. "And the beginning of this Palestinian society is also a beginning of the reconciliation between the two peoples — Israelis and Palestinians," he said in remarks broadcast by Israeli Army Radio.

People in the city of 45,000

— 60 per cent of whom are Muslims and 40 per cent of whom are Christians — waved wildly and whistled as the patriarch, himself a Palestinian, arrived at the church off the city's central Manger Square.

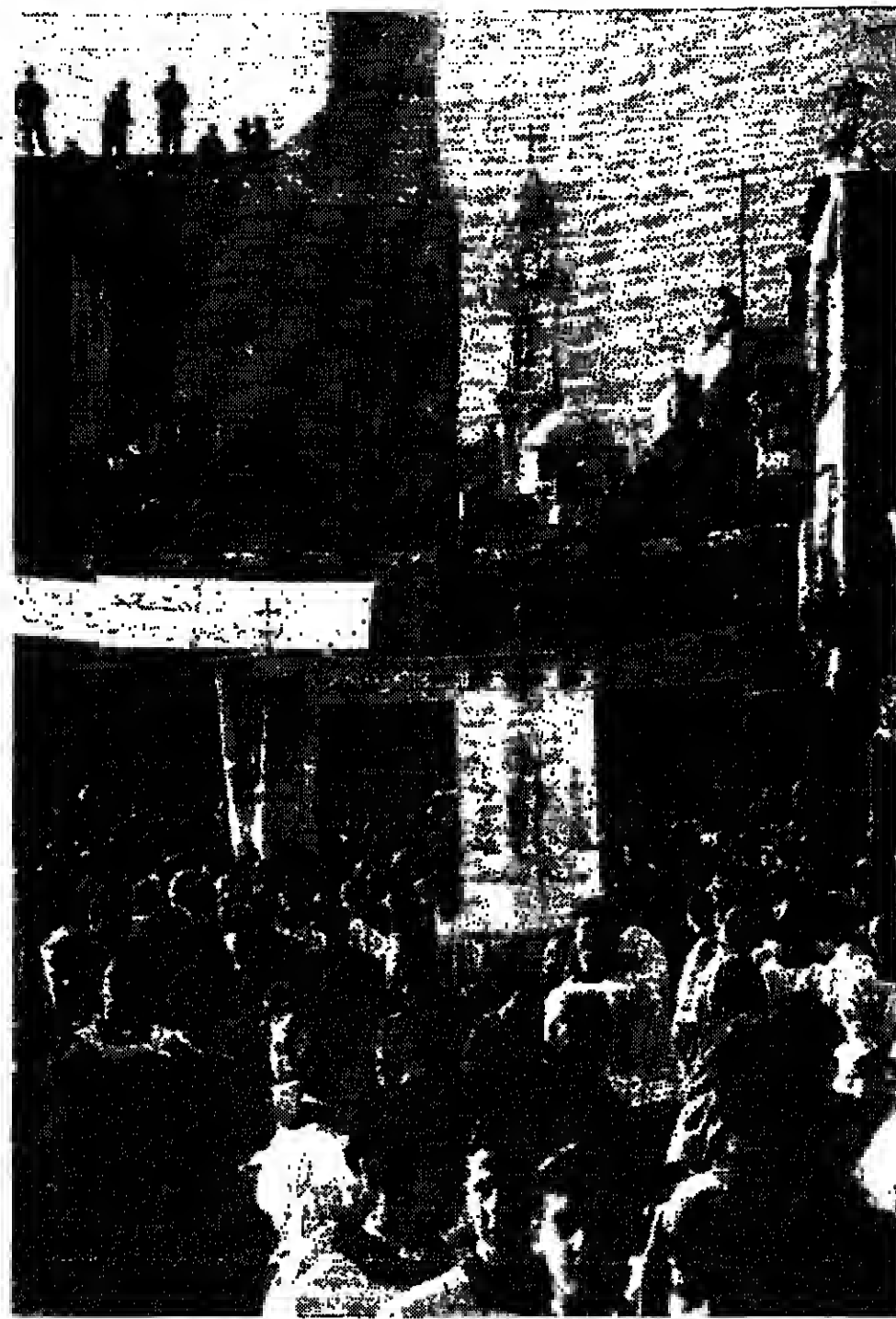
Armenian Father Nerses Krozian, who said he had prayed for this day for years, added: "It's like a dream-come-true now that the Israeli soldiers have gone and the Palestinian authority has taken over."

"I am now praying with feelings of freedom," he said. Organisers of Christmas Eve festivities said they expected 50,000 pilgrims to take part in the midnight mass along with Mr. Arafat.

"This is the first Christmas in 30 years we feel free to come to the square and really celebrate. We could not enter the square when Israelis were here. There were too many soldiers. We were cursed and spent hours being searched," said Arij Al Hayek, a 42-year-old housewife from Bethlehem.

"Now we have an Arab Palestinian authority, Palestinian police allowing us free entry and movement. There are a lot of police here but it's basically because the president is in Bethlehem," she said.

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The annual Christmas procession in Bethlehem gets underway Sunday as religious pilgrims, choir boys and thousands of Palestinians and Christian pilgrims make their way to the Church of the Nativity, traditional birthplace of Jesus Christ (Reuters photo)

Kabariti, Israeli official discuss ties, peace process Israel to decide 'soon' on fate of Jordanian prisoners

AMMAN (Agencies) — Foreign Minister Abdul Karim Kabariti and Israeli Deputy Foreign Minister Eli Dahan held talks Sunday on Jordanian-Israeli relations and Syrian-Israeli peace talks, which will resume in the United States Wednesday. The talks also dealt with implementation of the peace treaty which Jordan and Israel signed in October 1994.

A number of bilateral agreements remain under negotiation. "There is a national consensus in Israel about peace

with Jordan... We are going to sign the rest of the accords and develop our relations in tourism, trade and economic ties," said Mr. Dahan, who also met with Minister of Tourism Abdul Elah Al Khatib.

Technical teams from both sides also reviewed on Sunday a draft transport accord allowing free movement of private vehicle and commercial air traffic between the two countries.

Officials expect the transport accord to be signed soon, helping give a boost to

trade ties that are now held up as businessmen await rules of transport links.

Mr. Dahan said at a press conference after the talks with Mr. Kabariti that Israel will decide soon on the fate of 40 Jordanians after setting up a committee to look into their cases.

"We will solve the issue of the Jordanian prisoners who are still in Israel soon... We will discuss the issue intensively," Mr. Dahan said.

Mr. Dahan said a special government committee had been set up that "has put a

criteria to find positive solutions soon" to the plight of the prisoners whom Jordanian officials say are imprisoned on various charges of cross border infiltration and currency forgery.

Jordan's Ambassador to Israel Marwan Muasher said he hoped the "first batch of Jordanian prisoners would be handed over to Jordan soon."

Mr. Dahan said that the Israeli foreign minister, Ehud Barak, will pay a visit to Jordan in the second half of the coming month, adding

that the visit will be in the framework of the ongoing "positive political dialogue between the two countries," according to the Jordan News Agency, Petra.

Referring to the Palestinian elections scheduled for Jan. 20, Mr. Dahan said that the elections will be a major event for the Palestinians, who are voting for the first time under Palestinian self-rule.

Mr. Dahan said he was confident that the Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat will secure the majority of votes

Israel optimistic about talks with Syria

CAIRO (Agencies) — Israeli officials said Sunday that they are optimistic about the new rounds of peace talks that Damascus and Tel Aviv will start in the United States Wednesday.

"We are more optimistic than a few weeks ago... we see a warmer response coming from Syria," Ehud Barak, Israel's Foreign Minister, said after talks with his Egyptian counterpart Amr Musa.

Mr. Barak, on his first visit to Cairo as Israel's foreign minister, said "Peace with Syria is of strategic importance. We realise we need to take into account their interests, but they should also take into account our interests, including security."

Israel's Deputy Foreign Minister Eli Dahan said Israel is ready to pay a "heavy price" for a peace settlement with Syria, but the Jewish state wants to find out how serious Syria is for a "real peace."

"The depth of our withdrawal from the Golan Heights will depend on the depth of peace," Mr. Dahan told reporters in English.

"We need to hear about details like normalisation of relations, water and open borders, and then we will decide," he said.

Mr. Dahan warned that time for making peace is limited and urged the Syrians to move before Israel's parliamentary elections next November.

"They should know that we have very little time before the elections and if the Syrians want to make business, they have to do it now," Mr. Dahan said.

On Saturday, Syrian President Hafez Assad visited Cairo for talks with President Hosni Mubarak and also expressed optimism over the upcoming negotiations.

Asked what U.S. Secretary of State Warren Christopher offered that allowed the resumption of Syrian-Israeli negotiations, Mr. Assad said "a kind of new atmosphere indicating a new opening."

Mr. Musa was asked if he relayed any messages from Mr. Assad to Mr. Barak, and he said he emphasised Syria's interest in reaching a peace deal with Israel.

"There is progress in the general atmosphere and new ideas on the Syrian-Israeli

front. There is a direction towards optimism," Mr. Musa said. "The withdrawal from the Golan Heights is basic for Syria and their main demand."

Mr. Barak declined to give any details on how far Israel was willing to compromise on the Golan, which Israel occupied in the 1967 Middle East war and later annexed.

"We are very open minded. We need our early warning arrangements," he said. "The depth of peace will influence the depth of withdrawal."

Israel and Syria resume their peace talks near Washington on Wednesday after a six month break amid an unprecedented wave of optimism that a breakthrough could be only few months away.

Four years of on-off negotiations between Israel and Syria have failed to resolve differences over terms for an Israeli withdrawal from the Golan Heights.

Syria demands a full Israeli withdrawal. Israel will not detail the depth of a pullback until Syria says it peace means full ties, open borders and trade.

Recent statements by leaders of both countries have offered hope that a settlement to their nearly half a decade conflict could be reached in 1996.

Mr. Dahan said with cautious optimism that "while Israel felt Syria was being more positive" this could only be "checked when we begin the dialogue."

Prime Minister Shimon Peres was "ready to make all the efforts to reach an accord with Syria," Mr. Dahan said, adding a future summit meeting between Syrian President Hafez Al Assad and Mr. Peres could only bring "positive" results.

Both Syria and Israel have demonstrated a resolve to make headway since late prime minister Yitzhak Rabin's assassination on Nov. 4 by a right-wing Jew opposed to handing land to Arabs.

Mr. Assad said on Saturday that he backed the acceleration of peace moves and praised the flexibility of Mr. Peres.

(Continued on page 7)

670 hopefuls to contest Palestinian polls

GAZA CITY (Agencies) — Some 670 candidates had signed up to run in next month's first Palestinian self-rule elections to an 83-seat council when registration closed at midnight, officials said Sunday.

Osama Abu Safieh, coordinator of the central election commission in Gaza City, said the majority of candidates were standing as independents, including a handful of activists linked to hardline movements officially opposed to the January 20 polls.

In the Gaza Strip, 295 candidates signed up to run for the region's 34 council seats. Of the total, 229 registered as independents, according to the provisional list available Sunday, Mr. Safieh told AFP.

On the West Bank, 375 candidates registered. There was no immediate breakdown available of the West Bank candidates, Mr. Safieh said.

In the Gaza Strip, 33 candidates are running on the official Fateh Party list of Palestinian Authority President Yasser Arafat, including a former senior figure in the hardline Islamic Resistance Movement (Hamas), Imad Faluji, Mr. Safieh said. Hamas is virulently opposed to Mr. Arafat's par-

tial land-for-peace agreements with Israel and has refused to participate in the upcoming vote.

However at reconciliation talks with the self-rule authority last week in Cairo, the movement agreed not to call formally for a boycott of the polls.

Mr. Faluji, former editor of the official Hamas newspaper Al Watan, was ousted from the movement last week for working with Mr. Arafat's Palestinian Authority.

Mr. Safieh said other candidates represented a number of small parties, including the National Democratic Group, a left-wing PLO faction headed by Haidar Abul Shafi, who headed the PLO delegation to the 1991 Madrid peace conference.

Meanwhile, Mr. Arafat dissolved the self-rule Palestinian Authority (PA), late Saturday, one week before the beginning of the electoral campaigns.

Officials said nine members of the 24-member authority resigned at its meeting in the West Bank town of Bethlehem in order to stand in elections on Jan. 20.

Palestinian official Saeh Erekat said: "We officially resigned tonight... This was the last Palestinian Authority meeting."

Islamists lead in early results of Turk elections

ANKARA (R) — The Islamist Welfare Party (RP) edged in front of its two conservative rivals in early results from Sunday's elections, the state-run Anatolian news agency said.

First returns showed Welfare in first place on 21.2 per cent, followed closely by the main Motherland Party (ANAP) on 20.1 per cent. Prime Minister Tansu Ciller's True Path Party (DYP) was in third place with 19.9 per cent, Anatolian said.

Just more than 13 per cent of votes had been counted, it said. It was unclear how these early results would translate into seats in the 550-member parliament. Seats are assigned under a complex system of proportional representation.

The main Social Democratic Party, the Ultra-Nationalists and the Kurdish Party, meanwhile, are struggling for the 10 per cent of the national vote required to gain seats in parliament.

"Your decision is to choose civilisation or darkness," U.S. educated Prime Minister Tansu Ciller warned the electorate in a final blast at Welfare.

Later at a polling station near her Istanbul seaside home, a cheerful Ciller said as she cast her ballot: "We

can see democracy here in our nation."

Islamist leader Necmettin Erbakan, voting in Ankara, left little doubt the polls went beyond Ms. Ciller's Westernised notions of democracy.

"Allah will make these elections the day of deliverance for all the people of our country," said Mr. Erbakan, to the loud acclaim of the party faithful gathered around him.

But even RP voters, reflecting the general malaise of an electorate battered by runaway inflation, high unemployment and uneven economic growth, seemed less than committed.

"Let him come, and welcome to him," said one man awaiting Mr. Erbakan's arrival. "It will be change, and be certainly can't be worse (than others)."

Voting ended in Western Turkey at four p.m. (1400 GMT), one hour after polls closed in the east. Opinion polls had the three parties jockeying for the lead with little between them.

Horse-trading among the parties, none of which has any chance of an outright majority, is expected to take weeks at least.

In accordance with precedent, the president will ask the party with the most seats

to try to form a government. But the leading parties have all said they would not join forces with the Islamists, should they get the mandate.

Voters arrived at polling stations early in the capital Ankara, but the low-key atmosphere contrasted to the flag-waving motorcades and noisy soundtrucks of recent days. Electioneering is strictly banned on polling day.

In Istanbul, the RP forces even managed a show of strength at Ms. Ciller's own polling station, in the Posh Yenikoy district.

And in the remote eastern province of Tunceli, where officials laid on 20,000 troops to ensure election security, long queues formed at polling stations.

Ms. Ciller and her right-wing rival Mesut Yilmaz, leader of ANAP, pursued a campaign alternatively slamming one another and their Islamist foe.

However, Ms. Ciller is in danger of losing her grasp on the DYP if she cedes domination of the right to Mr. Yilmaz, a bitter personal rival.

The two leaders have stubbornly resisted calls, led by business circles, for a conservative coalition.

The prime minister was

Administrative divisions 'unfair' — deputy

By Sa'eda Kilani
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — An Islamist deputy Sunday rejected assertions by Minister of Interior Salameh Hamad that the government follows legal procedures in determining administrative divisions in the Kingdom, charging that these divisions are "inaccurate and unjust."

Ahmed Kassasbeh, member of the 17-member Islamic Action Front parliamentary bloc, said that "administrative divisions in the Kingdom were shaped in a way to go hand in hand with the government's plans for the coming parliamentary elections" that will be held in 1997.

In a written reply to an earlier question by Mr. Kassasbeh, Mr. Hamad said the government followed three rules when it changed administrative divisions. They were the number of inhabitants, the geographical area and the distance from the centre.

He said administrative changes are usually effected to provide the best services for the inhabitants of governorates, districts and sub-districts.

Citing figures and data for all districts and sub-districts that have been effected by the administrative changes which were stated in the new regulations that the cabinet endorsed last October and

are expected to be effective as of the beginning of next year, Mr. Kassasbeh said during a session of the Lower House of Parliament the changes were "illogical and unjust."

The new regulations, he said, divide the Kingdom into 85 administrative units that include 12 governorates, 39 districts and 344 sub-districts.

"Do we really need this high number of (administrative) divisions?" he asked. "Does not this entail a heavy financial and administrative burden" for the Kingdom? said Mr. Kassasbeh, on whose charges the government did not comment.

Also during the House's session Sunday, Deputy Nazeeh Amarin said that a large number of Jordanians have been denied the right to food coupons, mainly due to administrative difficulties that prevented them from collecting their coupons.

"The same thing happened last year," Dr. Amarin said. "If the Ministry of Supplies continues to be stubborn, then 2000 families in Kerak alone will be deprived of these coupons."

The government did not comment on Dr. Amarin's remarks either.

Meanwhile, lawmakers continued discussions of the House's bylaws during the session which House Speaker Sa'ad Hayel Srouf declared over after it lost quorum.

هنا عنه الفصل

Sheikh Zayed renews call for end to Iraqi suffering

DUBAI (Agencies) — United Arab Emirates (UAE) President Sheikh Zayed Bin Sultan Al Nahayan on Sunday renewed his call for an end to Iraqi suffering, stressing that Baghdad must fully comply with all U.N. resolutions.

Addressing a session of the consultative UAE national council, he also assured Iraq of UAE readiness to accept in advance any ruling by the world court over three strategic Gulf islands disputed with Tehran.

"While stressing the necessity of Iraq's taking all necessary steps to implement international resolutions, we are not ignoring the big difficulties suffered by the Iraqi people in their day-to-day life," he said in a speech reported by the official U.A.E. news agency.

U.N. sanctions were imposed on Iraq following its

1990 invasion of Kuwait, from which it was ousted in 1991 by a U.S.-led alliance.

Sheikh Zayed, who in October said the time had come for lifting the sanctions, urged Iraq in his speech to make use of a Security Council resolution which allows it to sell \$2 billion worth of oil over six months to buy food and other civilian goods.

Baghdad has rejected the resolution, saying it violates its sovereignty.

"Looking forward to the day when Iraq will hyps its present situation and become a constructive element in the Arab body, we strongly affirm our full anxiety to maintain the unity and territorial integrity of Iraq," he said.

His Majesty King Hussein has recently promoted the concept of a federation grouping the three major components of the popula-

tion — the Kurds in the north, the Sunni Muslims who dominate under President Saddam Hussein, and the Shi'ite Muslims.

On the dispute with Iran over three Gulf islands, Sheikh Zayed urged Tehran to end its occupation of the two Tumb islands and annual measures taken in the island of Abu Musa, and accept peaceful means including resorting to the International Court of Justice.

The dispute flared when Tehran tightened security measures in 1992 on Abu Musa, an island with several thousand inhabitants near oil shipping lanes at the mouth of the Gulf.

The UAE responded by reasserting its claim to the Tumb. In the latest round of talks in Qatar in November the two sides failed to agree on an agenda for negotiations.

"We renew our pledge which we made before to accept all the results that might come out as a result of the court's ruling on the dispute over the islands," he said.

"We reiterate the call to our brothers in the Islamic Republic of Iran to respond to our initiatives and calls and end their occupation of the three islands and stick to the memorandum of understanding on Abu Musa," he said.

A solution to this problem should be in accordance with the international law and through peaceful means, including arbitration. This solution is in line with our historic friendly relations and mutual interests.

Two rounds of negotiations between the Gulf nations over the past three years have failed to end the dispute and ease tension in their once strong links.



Two Iraqi children, collecting empty bottles for sale as a means of supporting their families, pass by a Santa Claus Saturday in Baghdad (AFP photo)

Qatar still squeezed in Gulf Arab alliance

DUBAI (R) — A dispute between Qatar and its Gulf Arab neighbours lingers on despite efforts by Doha to end its growing isolation, Gulf Arab official sources said.

"Qatar offered nothing new at the talks," said a well-placed source. "Qatar is in a critical position within the GCC."

Following talks on Saturday in Abu Dhabi and Muscat to find a way out of the dispute and ease the anger of former supporters within the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), Qatari Foreign Minister Sheikh Hamad Bin Jassim Bin Jahr Al Thani said:

"Qatar's stand is as it is and I do not want to comment further than the declared Qatari position in this issue." Hosts Oman and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) were disappointed and angered when Qatar's new Emir Sheikh Hamad Bin Khalifa Al Thani refused to attend the closing session of the annual GCC summit in Muscat Dec. 6.

"Qatar has no friends left in the GCC. It was already at odds with Saudi Arabia,

Bahrain and Oman," said a GCC source.

Qatar took the embarrassing step to protest against the method by which the alliance appointed Saudi national Jameel Al Hujailan as GCC secretary-general, dropping Doha's candidate.

Its allies were further angered when the Qatari foreign minister threatened prior to the fence-mending tour to boycott all GCC and other Arab meetings if Mr. Hujailan is allowed to attend as secretary-general. He assumes the post in March.

He had earlier proposed the formation of a GCC committee to review the dispute and pledged to abide by its decision but a Gulf Arab official said late on Saturday: "The ball is in their court, the solution lies with Qatar not with us (GCC states)."

Qatar has stressed that it would host the next GCC summit, as scheduled, but it also angered its GCC partners, mainly the group's dominant power Saudi Arabia, when it discussed the dispute with the United States and other world pow-

ers.

The minister's UAE visit coincided with the presence in Abu Dhabi of former Qatari Emir, Sheikh Khalifa Bin Hamad Al Thani, who was toppled by his son in June while on a foreign tour. The Qatari minister described the visit as "normal and his right. We also welcome him to visit his country Qatar and wish him good health and hope he visits Qatar some day."

UAE officials stressed that the visit was set prior to the GCC summit and that Doha was informed of it several weeks ago.

But in a sign of further pressure on Doha, the deposed Emir is expected to visit other GCC states in the next few days, including Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and Bahrain, officials said.

Late on Saturday, Saudi television said Crown Prince Abdullah received a telephone call from the former Emir to ask about the health of Saudi King Fahd who was discharged from hospital earlier this month after suffering what U.S. officials said was a stroke.

OAU accused of meddling in Somalia

MOGADISHU (AFP) — The faction of General Mohammed Farah Aideded has accused the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) of persistently interfering in Somalia's internal affairs, press reports said Sunday.

In a speech delivered Saturday and widely reported by the press, General Jama Mohammed Qalib, the "foreign minister" of Gen. Aideded's United Somali Congress (USC) faction, said the OAU was "determinedly interfering in the internal affairs of the Somali people."

Mr. Qalib also accused OAU Secretary-General Salim Ahmad Salim of encouraging elements within Somalia who he charged are being manipulated by foreigners.

"Somalia is a sovereign state being ruled by a government supported by the majority of the Somalia people," Mr. Qalib said.

The anger against the OAU was apparently prompted by reports of a proposed national reconciliation conference to be organised by the OAU to try to reconcile Somalia's warring factions. Apart from the OAU, the

Arab League and other Islamic countries have also recently offered to mediate between the Somali faction leaders.

Aideded's government was formed after a conference of his supporters declared him interim president of Somalia for three years in Mogadishu in June, but other Somali clan factions have refused to recognise it and have called for its disbandment.

Other African countries, with the exception of Libya, have also refused to recognise Gen. Aideded's government. Meanwhile, a Sharia court source in Mogadishu said a large number of heavily-armed Islamic militiamen have been ordered onto the streets of north Mogadishu to enforce strict application of Islamic Sharia laws.

The order came during an address Saturday at a religious gathering in northern Mogadishu given by Sharia court chairman Sheikh Ali Mahmoud, who recently returned from a pilgrimage to Saudi Arabia.

After he issued the order, Islamic militiamen descended on the streets of the northern half of capital.

Sudanese assembly passes election bill

KHARTOUM (R) — Sudan's appointed legislature has approved a bill by President Omar Hassan Al Bashir on the mechanism to elect a head of state and his government, local media reported Sunday.

The national assembly approved the 13th constitutional decree Saturday with minor changes. It sets procedures for electing the president and forming a cabinet, and the powers of the president and the duties of ministers.

Sudan is due to hold parliamentary and presidential elections next year. Some newspapers have said both elections could take place as early as February.

On June 30, 1989, Prime Minister Sadeq Al Mahdi's civilian government was toppled in a coup which placed Gen. Bashir, a lieutenant general, as the head of a military government.

Gen. Bashir's decree has been an issue of debate by the legislature, which has more than once postponed its approval because of reservations.

A proposal by some deputies that the post of first vice president be reserved for southern Sudanese, who have long complained of being excluded from the centre of power in Khartoum, was not adopted.

Southerners have long felt they do not get a fair share of power in Khartoum but successive governments, including Gen. Bashir's, have given the post of first vice president to a northerner and that of second vice president to a southerner.

The independent Akhbar Al Youm newspaper said that Jang Twong, the head of the peace committee and a leading southern Sudanese in the assembly, had withdrawn the proposal calling for a southerner to occupy the post of first vice president.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Israel denies role in Eritrean invasion

CAIRO (AFP) — Israeli Foreign Minister Ehud Barak denied on Sunday his country had a hand in the conflict between Eritrea and Yemen over a strategic island at the mouth of the Red Sea. "I deny categorically," reports of Israeli links to the bloody dispute, Mr. Barak said at a press conference in Cairo. "We didn't have any role in the past or in this present conflict. We are not aware of anything going on about those islands." Mr. Barak said, Yemen and the Egyptian press have implicitly accused Israel of backing Eritrea when it invaded the island of Hanish Al Kebir, claimed by both Asmara and Sanaa, and seized it a week ago.

Arab urban population to reach 157m

CAIRO (AFP) — The population of Middle Eastern cities will have increased fifty-fold over the course of the 20th century, an Arab League report said Sunday. In 1900, the urban population numbered 3.5 million in the Arab World and has now reached 130 million, while the number of cities with over a million residents has increased to 15, the report said. By 2000 the urban population is expected to reach 157 million, it said. The report, compiled in preparation for an urban conference to be held in Istanbul next June, warned of a "growing crisis in major Arab cities." Unchecked urban growth could lead to "deterioration of economic performance and productivity, increased consumption and spending, as well as the social effects of widespread poverty among city residents," the report said.

Student causes bomb scare to avoid exam

KUWAIT (R) — A Kuwait university student faces a five-year jail term for causing a bomb scare to avoid taking an exam, a local newspaper said Sunday. "Investigations revealed that the student was not ready for an examination. That drove him to think of a way to cancel it," Al Sayassah newspaper quoted security sources as saying. Prosecutors filed a suit against the student who might end up in jail for five years for disturbing the authorities, it said. The newspaper did not give the student's name, age or the subject of the examination.

Egyptian sets himself ablaze

CAIRO (AFP) — A Cairo man set himself on fire in a failed attempt to convince his wife to pawn her jewelry to buy a new video recorder, the daily Al Akhbar reported on Sunday. Mohammed Abdul Mohammad, 36, an employee in a cafe, doused himself with kerosene and threatened to immolate himself if his wife did not sell off her jewelry, the paper said. She called his bluff, so Mohammed struck a match and repeated his threat. She refused again, but then the flame accidentally caught Mohammed's soaking clothes. Neighbour's burst into their flat to find the unidentified wife and her 15-year-old daughter standing watching the husband go up in flames, the paper said. Mohammed was taken to hospital with burns over 60 per cent of his body. Police were told he had wanted the cash from the jewelry to buy a new video to replace one stolen from this cafe.

Sudan to release 3,500 inmates over Christmas

KHARTOUM (R) — Sudanese President Lieutenant General Omar Hassan Al Bashir has ordered the release of 3,500 prisoners as a goodwill gesture on the occasions of Christmas and his country's independence anniversary. Sudan gained independence from Britain Jan. 1, 1956. The official Sudan News Agency, SUNA, said on Sunday that Gen. Bashir issued a decree dropping the remaining sentences of male and female prisoners who have completed half of their terms on condition that any fines imposed on them are paid.

Americans in S. Arabia plan low-key Christmas

DUBAI (R) — Americans in Saudi Arabia are celebrating Christmas discreetly as always in the Muslim kingdom, undeterred by security warnings that more bombings may be planned against Westerners over the holiday.

The U.S. State Department Saturday said it feared attacks against Americans and other Westerners in Saudi Arabia over the holiday after the car bomb in November at a U.S.-run military centre in Riyadh which killed five Americans and two Indians.

"We have received unconfirmed information that additional bombings may be planned against Western interests in Saudi Arabia," the U.S. embassy in Riyadh told callers.

There are about 35,000

Americans in the kingdom.

Security was tightened at U.S. facilities and walled compounds for foreigners after the car bomb. There have been no reported arrests but three groups claimed responsibility and cited opposition to Riyadh's close ties with the West.

"We believe that the upcoming holiday season could be a time of special concern," the State Department said in Washington.

Americans in Saudi Arabia should exercise caution, keep a low profile, and reduce travel within Saudi Arabia, it added.

One American said on Sunday he saw two Christmas trees in the windows of the residential compound of the bombed complex.

Christmas celebrations

by Saudi Arabia's expatriate community have always been discreet affairs. Most expatriate families leave Saudi Arabia over the holiday, and those who stay behind celebrate quietly in compounds out of respect for the kingdom's role as home of Islam's holiest shrines.

"It (the bombing) is always at the back of our minds," a Riyadh-based American lawyer said. "There are not many expatriates left in town. A huge number leave for the holidays."

"Christmas parties go on all over the place, but they're on the sedate side," he told Reuters by telephone.

Charles Vernon, an American working in Jeddah, said "I live on a Western compound. There are

no ostentatious Christmas displays. This is a very conservative Islamic country and no-one wants to offend Islamic sensibilities."

"The Western compounds are pretty insular," said Steve Swager, an American businessman who works in Riyadh.

Season's greetings cards sold in Saudi Arabia avoid religious symbols. One put a bedouin spin on the seasonal theme by depicting a camel draped in bolly.

Christmas trees also take on a distinctly desert style.

"The compound manager puts up lights in the palm trees," said Mr. Swager. He said he saw a mao in Saudi robes selling poinsettias and pine trees from a truck outside a Western compound on Saturday.

"Artificial trees are sold

in Saudi stores as well as ornaments devoid of any Christian symbols," said Mr. Swager.

Religious services are prohibited but residents say some are quietly held on Western military complexes or embassies.

A diplomat said the Saudi religious police, who ensure the kingdom's conservative Muslim values are observed in public, become increasingly vigilant at this time of year.

Mr. Swager, a bachelor from Huntsville, Alabama, said he might spend Christmas day over a TV dinner but there was still a bright side to spending it in the kingdom.

"A lot of people suffer from Christmas depression," he said. "So being in Saudi away from all that commercialism is good."

JORDAN TELEVISION

Tel. 773111-19

PROGRAMME TWO

14:00 Cartoon Movie: "A Boy Named Charlie Brown"
15:30 Family Christmas Movie: "Ernest Saves Christmas"
17:00 Children's programme — "C'Est Pas Sorcier"
17:30 Series — Des Heros Ordinaires
19:00 News in French
19:15 Magazine — Nimbus
19:30 News Headlines
19:35 Home Improvement
20:00 Inventions
20:25 The Bold and the Beautiful
21:10 Star Trek
22:00 News in English
22:25 "The Man in Santa Claus suit"
23:00 The Four Seasons

PRAYER TIMES

05:06 Fajr
06:25 Sunrise
11:35 Dhuhr
14:19 Asr
16:42 Maghrib
18:02 Isha

CHURCHES

St. Mary of Nazareth Church
Swethel, Tel. 810740

Assemblies of God Church, Tel. 63785.

St. Joseph Church Tel. 624590.
Church of the Annunciation Tel. 637440.

De la Salle Church Tel. 661757
Terrence Church Tel. 623666
Church of the Annunciation Tel. 623541.

Anglican Church Tel. 652826
Armenian Catholic Church Tel. 771331.
Armenian Orthodox Church Tel. 775261.

St. Ephraim Church Tel. 771751.
Armenian International Church Tel. 652526.
Evangelical Lutheran Church Tel. 824328.

German-speaking Evangelical Congregation Tel. 654557
The Latter-Day Saints Tel. 654952
Church of Nazareth Tel. 675691.
The Evangelical Local Church in Amman Tel. 811295

WEATHER

Bulletin supplied by the Department of Meteorology.

Sunny weather conditions will prevail with temperatures around average and winds southeasterly light to active. In Aqaba, winds will be northerly moderate and seas calm.

Min./Max. temp.

JORDAN TIMES DAILY GUIDE AND CALENDAR

Amman 3/15
Aqaba 10/20
Deserts 2/16
Jordan Valley 9/21

Yesterday's high temperatures:
Amman 16, Aqaba 21 Humidity
readings: Amman 56 per cent,
Aqaba 56 per cent.

USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS

NIGHT DUTY

AMMAN:
Dr. Ghaleb Zaidieh 736011
Dr. Fakher Belhadi 634112
Dr. Khalil Al Tushy 752553
Dr. Osama Al Hussein 847289
Firas pharmacy 661912
Ferdows pharmacy 778336
Al Asena pharmacy 637055
Nairoukh pharmacy 623672
Al Salam pharmacy 636730
Yacoub pharmacy 644945
Shmician pharmacy 637680
Nairoukh pharmacy 623672
Najib pharmacy 847632

IRBID:
Dr. Ahmad Qanu 281494
Alquds pharmacy (—)
ZARQA:
Dr. Amin Abul Rub 982293
Khalifeh pharmacy 985417

Food Control Centre 637111
Civil Defence Department 661111
Civil Defence Immediate 630341
Rescue 630341
Civil Defence Emergency 199
Rescue Police 192 621111, 637777
Fire Brigade 617101
Blood Bank 773121
Highway Police 83402
Traffic Police 896390
Public Security Department 630321
Hotel Complaints 605800
Price Complaints 661176
Water and Sewerage 897467
Complaints 787111
Amman Municipality 661912
Complaints 787111
Telephone Information 121
Overseas Calls 010230
Central Amman Telephone 623167
Repairs 623167
Abdali Telephone Repairs 661101
Jordan Television 773111
Radio Jordan 774111
Water Authority 680100
Jordan Electricity Authority 815615

Electric Power Company 636381
RJ Flight Information 08-53200

Queen Alia Int. Airport 08-53200

HOSPITALS

AMMAN:
Husseini Medical Centre 813813/32
Khalidi Maternity, J. Amn 644281/6
Akileh Maternity, J. Amn 644241/2
Jabal Amman Maternity 642502
Mallus, J. Amman 636140
Palestine, Shmeisani 660701
Shmeisani Hospital 669131
University Hospital 845845
Al-Musharraf Hospital 667277/9
The Islamic, Abdali 666173/7
Al-Ahli, Abdali 661164/6
Italian, Al-Muhajreen 777101/3
Al-Bashir, J. Ashrafieh 775111/26
Army, Marka 891611/15
Queen Alia Hospital 622240/50
Amal Hospital 674155
The Arab Center for Heart and Special Surgery 865199
ZARQA:
Zarqa Govt. Hospital (09)983323
Zarqa National Hospital (09)900560
Ibn Sina Hospital (09)988732
Al Hikma Modern Hospital (09)990990
Irbid:
Princess Basma Hospital (02)275555
Greek Catholic Hospital (02)727725
Ibn Al Nafes Hospital (02)247100
AQABA:
Princess Haya Hospital (03)314111

FOR THE TRAVELLER

QUEEN ALIA INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT

This information is supplied by Royal Jordanian (RJ) information department at the Queen Alia International Airport Tel. (08)53200-5, where it should always be verified.

ARRIVALS Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights (Terminal 1)

07:20 Sanaa (RJ)
07:35 Jeddah (RJ)
07:50 Damascus (RJ)
08:30 New Delhi (RJ)
09:55 Dubai, Abu Dhabi (RJ)
10:05 Beirut (RJ)
10:20 Cairo (RJ)
10:40 Casablanca, Tunis (RJ)
19:00 Bangkok (RJ)

Other Flights (Terminal 2)

04:00 Rome (AZ)
09:45 Khartoum (SD)
09:58 Cairo (MS)

12:40 Muscat, Abu Dhabi (GF)
15:00 Vienna (OS)
15:30 Kiev (SU)
19:00 Paris, Damascus (AF)
22:45 Athens, Beirut (OA)
23:05 London (BA)
01:20 Amsterdam (KL)

DEPARTURES Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights (Terminal 1)

06:15 Beirut (RJ)
11:00 Amsterdam, Chicago (RJ)
12:05 Frankfurt, London (RJ)
12:15 Cairo (RJ)
12:25 Frankfurt (RJ)
20:15 Bahrain, Doha (RJ)
07:45 Damascus (RJ)
21:00 Abu Dhabi (RJ)
21:15 Dubai, Muscat (RJ)

Other Flights (Terminal 2)

05:00 Rome (AZ)
06:00 Istanbul (TK)
06:50 Beirut, London (BA)
07:45 Beirut (ME)
10:40 Beirut (RJ)
13:30 Cairo (MS)
15:50 Bahrain, Abu Dhabi, Muscat (GF)
16:30 Vienna (OS)
06:40 Kiev (SU)
02:30 London (BA)
03:00 Amsterdam (KL)
03:00 Beirut, Athens (OA)

HIJAZ RAILWAY TRAIN

Dep. Amman 8:00 every Monday

Arr. Damascus 5:00 p.m. every Monday
Dep. Damascus 7:30 a.m. every Sunday
Arr. Amman 5:00 p.m. every Sunday

MARKET PRICES

Upper/lower price in fils per kg.

Apple 700/500
Banana 680
Banana (Mukammal) 620
Banana (imported) 500/700
Cabbage 100/50
Carrot 260/150
Cauliflower 110/50
Cucumbers (large) 200/120
Cucumbers (small) 350/220
Eggplant 200/100
Garlic 750/500
Grape Fruit 220/150
Lemon 250/180
Marrow (large) 120/80
Marrow (small) 230/150
Onion (green) 150/80
Onion (dry) 250/150
Orange 540/400
Pepper (hot) 260/180
Pepper (sweet) 260/180
Potato 260/180
Radish 150/80
Spinach 120/80
String Beans 530/450
Tangerine 270/200
Tomato 170/100

Meeting to study 'Health for All' goal

'Ministry faces organisational obstacles in goal achievement'

AMMAN (Petra) — The Health Ministry, which in 1980 pledged to achieve the goal run by the slogan "Health Services for All By the Year 2000", has encountered a number of obstacles, according to Sa'ad Kharabsheh, director of the ministry's Disease Control Department.

In his address Sunday to the opening session of a four-day meeting by countries in the east Mediterranean region, Dr. Kharabsheh said a great deal had, however, been achieved towards attaining that objective.

The ministry faces the problem of a lack of coordination among various parties in the health sector, an absence of teamwork spirit and a lack of meaningful and effective participation on the part of local communities towards the achievement of the health goal, according to Dr. Kharabsheh.

Dr. Kharabsheh said his department has been involved in promoting pri-

mary health care among doctors and health cadres, providing training to staff and improving the operational management of health centres.

According to the director, the ministry has also been involved in cooperation with the Noor Al Hussein Foundation (NHF) in the implementation of "The Improvement of Quality of Life" goal among various communities, with backing and support from the World Health Organisation (WHO).

Dr. Kharabsheh said he hoped the four-day meeting, attended by delegates from eight nations, will give assessment and evaluation reports on progress achieved so far in basic and primary health care services in the region.

NHF Executive Director Ibrahim Badran outlined the foundation's efforts over the past decade towards improving conditions of less fortunate

communities. He noted NHF's achievements in carrying out 34 projects which aim to benefit 45,000 people in different communities.

Omar Suleiman, WHO's regional representative, said the 21st century will bring new challenges to health services. He said WHO's various regional offices will continue to cooperate with national governments in order to overcome obstacles impeding the improvement of primary health services.

Organised by the WHO regional office, the meeting is attended by delegates from Jordan, Egypt, Tunisia, Yemen, Morocco, Djibouti, Iran and Pakistan, in addition to WHO experts.

Delegates will review primary health services and examine the challenges facing various participating nations in attaining the goal "Health for All by the Year 2000."

Three sentenced to life for murder of newborn

By Rana Hussein
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — One man was sentenced to life imprisonment for the murder of his newborn son and two more, including a woman, were sentenced each to seven and a half years by the Criminal Court Sunday for participating in the crime.

Ali Yusef Zugheimat, 27, first received the death sentence for killing his seven-days old son Mohammad, but the sentence was reduced to life imprisonment because of the filial relation between the victim and the convict, Presiding Judge Abdul Rahman Tawfiq said.

The mother of the newborn, Basma Rudwan, 20, was first sentenced to 15 years but the verdict was reduced to half for the same legal reason, Judge Tawfiq added.

Ahmad Radi Zugheimat,

33, a close relative of the convicts also received seven and a half years for his role which was to bury the child in a deserted area to conceal the crime.

According to court documents, Ali married Basma after learning that she became pregnant. The baby was delivered four months after the couple had married. On Feb. 2, seven days after Mohammad was born, the documents said, the couple "regretted their actions and decided to kill the newborn to cleanse their honour."

The document said that the same evening, Ali placed blankets and pillows over his son's face and after his son died, he asked Ahmad to help him get rid of the body.

Ahmad took the body and buried it in a deserted area. Two days later Ahmad informed the authorities, the document said.

The verdict will automatically be reviewed by the Court of Cassation in the next 15 days.

Also Sunday, the court heard testimonies of three witnesses in the case of a 29-year-old man accused of robbing, killing and mutilating a man in Salt in August.

Kayed Ahmad is charged with the brutal murder of Mohammad Ensour in his house in Salt on Aug. 14, stealing his money then cutting his body into parts over a money feud. The defendant pleaded not guilty to the charges during the Nov. 6 opening session.

Ahmad Ensour, brother of the victim told the court that he was informed by his brother that the defendant was helping him obtain a taxi licence.

After his brother's disappearance, Ahmad said that he asked the defendant

whereabouts "since he was informed by friends that Kayed was the last person to see his brother."

"Kayed at first denied seeing my brother the day he disappeared but then after confronting him he said he did see him, but had no idea of his whereabouts," Mr. Ensour told the court.

The court also heard testimonies of two police officers who retrieved part of the evidence including a saw that the alleged killer used to cut Mr. Ensour's body and some documents that belonged to the victim which was found in a bag in Salt by authorities.

Presiding Judge Tawfiq set Jan. 13 to continue hearing the case.

Accountability in Islam is general in nature, scholars tell court

By Rana Hussein
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — Two defence witnesses in the case of Atta Abu Rishteh, who is being tried for allegedly slandering His Majesty King Hussein, Sunday testified at the State Security Court that accountability in Islam involved the ruler and his subjects in general and that personal advice made in public may become slanderous or libelous.

Chief Islamic Justice Sheikh Izzeddin Al Khathib Al Tamimi, 68, advisor to the King and Sheikh Abdul Azziz Khayat, a senator and a former minister of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs appeared in court in their capacity as Islamic scholars on the rulings of Islam in the relationship between the rulers and the ruled.

Mr. Abu Rishteh, spokesman of the illegal Hezb Al Tahrir party (Liberation party), is also charged with belonging to an illegal organisation.

Last month, Mr. Abu Rishteh, who was apprehended by the authorities on Oct. 15, following an interview with the weekly Al Hiwar, pleaded innocent to both charges.

On Dec. 17, Mr. Abu Rishteh told the tribunal that the newspaper interview was based on interpretations of the Islamic Sharia and that he was only "following his right to question officials as embedded in the Sharia."

However, on Sunday when asked by the defence about political accountability, Sheikh Tamimi told the court

that there are no special articles in Islamic Sharia that deal with political accountability.

Mr. Abu Rishteh's defence was trying to prove that the defendant's interview was based on political accountability in Islam which, he said, was the right of every Muslim and one of the main pillars of Islamic Sharia.

Sheikh Khayat testified that it was permissible for Muslims to question or advise their rulers in general and not on specific issues.

"The question or advice should be directed from the nation to its ruler and should not be in a slanderous form, otherwise it is no longer advice," Sheikh Khathib said.

Asked by Mr. Abu Rishteh's attorney if negotiating with "infidels" was permissible in Islam, Sheikh Khayat said it was.

"Prophet Mohammad negotiated with the infidels on several occasions," he said.

He cited an example when Prophet Mohammad negotiated with the Jews. Al Hudeibia pact, in which the Prophet considered the Jews as part of the Islamic nation and allowed them to keep their own religion and follow their own legislation.

In another question, the attorney asked Sheikh Khayat whether recognising a certain state, Israel, from a Sharia point of view was legal and whether establishing ties with it is permissible. Sheikh Khayat said "it is acceptable by Islam."

The defence also asked Sheikh

Khayat on Islam's stand on negotiating with "infidels" and relinquishing lands to them.

"Relinquishing an occupied land depends on the circumstances, if a ruler cannot regain these lands (by force), it is possible to negotiate instead," he added.

Mohammad Salameh Dweik, one of Mr. Abu Rishteh's attorneys, withdrew from court in the course of the two-hour session, in protest against some legal procedures.

"Since the court writer was not transcribing what the witness (Sheikh Khayat) was saying and since I protested against this, I was asked to be quiet by the court and since my request does not violate any of the court procedures, I request to withdraw from the case," Mr. Dweik told the court.

Judge Hafez Amin accepted Mr. Dweik's request and ordered that Mr. Dweik be warned for interrupting the court while the witness was testifying.

Judge Amin adjourned the session until Dec. 30 to hear the two witnesses who failed to show up at court. They are Munjid Namara, reporter of Al Hiwar newspaper who interviewed Mr. Abu Rishteh and Mohammad Amin, director of the Press and Publications Department at the Ministry of Information.

If convicted, Mr. Abu Rishteh could face up to three years imprisonment.

Local firm to carry out JD 4.72m water network substitution

'Substitution of water networks will reduce water loss'

AMMAN (J.T.) — The Ministry of Water and Irrigation Sunday awarded a local firm a JD 4.72 million to carry out the second part of the first phase of a project for the substitution of the water network in the Amman area.

Minister of Water and Irrigation Saleh Irshaidat told the press after the signing ceremony at his office that 80 per cent of the project will be covered by a soft loan which the ministry was granted by the German Development Bank.

The project, which will take two years to complete, entails substituting old

water networks at Jabal Hussein and Nuzha and linking the water mains with residences in these two areas, the minister said.

The project is bound to reduce, by 25 per cent, water which is wasted through leakage from the existing underground network.

The old network is responsible for the loss of 50 per cent of its waters currently being pumped to residences and businesses in the Amman region, the minister said.

According to Dr. Irshaidat, the replacement of all water networks in Jordan is expected to cost JD 200

million. The cost is expected to be covered by further soft loans from the German Development Bank.

The company will start work on the project next month.

Dr. Irshaidat also noted that the ministry has so far substituted networks in Irbid and Zarqa, and expects to start work on the water network in Mafraq next year.

He added that work is underway for substituting the network in the Salt region, a project which is expected to be completed during 1996.

The ministry aims to have

all water networks in the Kingdom substituted with new ones by the end of this century, according to Dr. Irshaidat.

On the subject of sewage systems, Dr. Irshaidat said the ministry will soon award a contract for laying the sewage network in Irbid, plans that have been completed and approved by the German Development Bank, which will also finance the project.

The sewage network in Irbid will cost JD 45 million, he said.

Serve 60 per cent of the population, according to the minister.

Government appoints two secretary generals

AMMAN (J.T.) — The government appointed Khamis Abu Salim and Ibrahim Naghawai as secretary generals of the Ministry of Interior and Foreign Affairs respectively. Mr. Abu Saleem, who has been a civil servant for the past 24 years, and who started his new post on Saturday told the Jordan Times that he intends to work closely with governors and local councils to enhance the process of decentralisation in the Kingdom.

"I intend to cooperate with governors in order to develop the division of the country into administrative units," Mr. Abu Salim stated.

The government recently made amendments to the structure of the country's governorate. The administrative divisions system, which was endorsed on Sunday, gives greater authority to local governors including protection of public freedoms and human rights, and ensuring stability and security.

Mr. Abu Salim, born in 1945, succeeded Faisal Khasawneh, who resigned this month.

Before joining the Ministry of Interior Mr. Abu Salim, who has a bachelor's degree in administrative development from Baghdad University, was the director of local councils at the Ministry of Municipal and Rural Affairs and the Environment.

Mr. Naghawai, born in 1936, was officially appointed on Sunday. He has been acting secretary general at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs for the past three months.

Mr. Naghawai, a career diplomat, has, for the past six years, been the director of Consulate Affairs at the ministry. Mr. Naghawai, who holds a bachelor's degree in political science and history from the American University in Beirut, succeeded Nayef Hadeed, who was appointed as Jordan's ambassador to Morocco.

Delegation returns after transport talks in Russia

AMMAN (Petra) — A Jordanian delegation returned to Amman Sunday from Russia and Hungary after conducting talks with government officials there on facilitating transport operations with Jordan.

Talks between officials of both countries covered the question of taxes and fees imposed on Jordanian trucks travelling to or passing in transit through the two countries, according to Abdullah Jbour, who headed the delegation.

Mr. Jbour, who is head of the ministry's road transport department, said Russia has agreed to exempt a certain number of Jordanian trucks from all imposed fees and taxes. These have lately amounted to nearly \$1,600 per truck for each trip, he said, adding that Jordan will offer Russia reciprocal treatment.

This agreement is bound to have positive as well as beneficial effects on trade exchanges and the marketing of Jordanian products, Mr. Jbour said.

The two sides agreed to embark on preparing a draft transport agreement to regulate transport operations between both countries. Drafts would first be scrutinised by authorities from both sides before they are endorsed, Mr. Jbour said.

Mr. Jbour said he conveyed an invitation to a Russian delegation to visit Jordan in the second quarter of 1996 to pursue negotiations on the transport agreement.

Referring to talks which took place in Hungary, Mr. Jbour said discussions also covered taxes and fees on Jordanian trucks. The two sides agreed to secure the approval of concerned authorities in both Hungary and Jordan to exempt a limited number of trucks from taxes and fees upon border entry to Hungary, either in transit to other countries or for the transportation of goods destined to either countries.



AND MERRY CHRISTMAS TO YOU TOO: A somewhat underweight Father Christmas greets a group of curious children in Wadi Sagra street to give them their season's wishes and, to the children's delight, a lollipop each (Photo by Yusef Al 'Allan)

NEWS IN BRIEF

Prince Ra'ad visits ministry

AMMAN (Petra) — Chief Chamberlain Prince Ra'ad Bin Zeid Sunday called at the Ministry of Water and Irrigation where he was briefed by Minister Saleh Irshaidat on water projects being carried out by the ministry, as part of its ongoing efforts to meet citizens' water needs. Prince Ra'ad was also briefed on progress in the water projects presented to the Middle East and North Africa summit, which was held here Oct. 29. Dr. Irshaidat presented a detailed briefing on the Jordan Rift Valley.

Banks closed today

AMMAN (Petra) — All banks and financial companies will be closed today in observance of Christmas, according to a communiqué issued by the Central Bank of Jordan.

Business delegation to head to Kenya

AMMAN (J.T.) — A Jordanian delegation of businessmen and aviation officials will head to Kenya on Jan. 20 for talks on prospects of promoting economic and trade ties between Kenya and Jordan, according to Kenya's Honorary Consul in Jordan Amjad Hani Mousa Sunday. The consul said trade has doubled between the two countries over the past four years, with Jordan exporting fertilisers to the African country in exchange for Kenyan coffee, iron sheets, textiles and traditional jewellery. He said the delegation going to Kenya next month will discuss

prospects for an air transport agreement between the two countries and the exchange of health expertise and scholarships, in addition to talks on trade.

Umra buses to obtain special permit

AMMAN (Petra) — The Public Security Department Sunday called on drivers of medium-sized vehicles and buses, carrying Umra passengers to Saudi Arabia to obtain a prior permit from the traffic department. PSD sources said no vehicle, irrespective of whether it is carrying private or public plates, will be allowed to operate services to Saudi Arabia unless the drivers obtain special permits from the Traffic Department.

Committee holds workshop on poverty

IRBID (Petra) — The National Jordanian Committee on Women's Affairs Sunday held a one-day workshop at Princess Basma Social Development Centre on the role of women in identifying areas of poverty and in addressing poverty issues. A total of 30 women participants discussed working papers presented by the coordinator of Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs), and representatives of the Ministry of Social Development and Princess Basma Centre. The papers dealt with issues such as reducing poverty effects and the role of women committees in fighting the problem of poverty.

WHAT'S GOING ON

EXHIBITIONS

* Photography exhibition, Kingdom Of Peace, by Zohrab Markarian at The National Gallery, Jabal Weibdeh. (Until Dec. 26th).
* Works by artist Hind Nasser at Darat Al Funun (until Jan. 6).
* Photography by poet Ibrahim Nasrallah entitled "The Autobiography of an Eye" at Darat Al Funun, Jabal Weibdeh. (Until Jan. 4). * Photography exhibi-

tion "Biblical Itineraries" at the French Cultural Centre. (Until Dec. 30).

CHRISTMAS SALE

* Gifts and crafts by Suha Lallas Kassisteh at the Jordan Design and Trade Centre of the Noor Al Hussein Foundation, off Wadi Sagra Street (until Dec. 31).

Tamil rebels rout army patrol; Sri Lanka vows to hit back

COLOMBO (Agencies) — The Tamil Tiger guerrillas ended a three-week lull in major violence by routing an entire army patrol in eastern Sri Lanka and the military responded by vowing to hit back hard.

Dozens of gunmen from the separatist Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) surprised the troops in the coastal district of Batticaloa Saturday despite an alert for pre-Christmas attacks in the region, officials said.

A military spokesman said 34 soldiers were killed on the spot and another 36 wounded in a two-hour gun battle. The military claimed killing at least 60 rebels in a counter offensive.

Army chief Lieutenant-General Gerry De Silva Sunday claimed his men were better prepared to fight in the eastern region where the Tigers had taken over vast areas after losing their Jaffna bastion in the north.

"We will take them (LTTE) on. We are in a better position now," Gen. De Silva was quoted as saying in the Sunday Times. "They are down but not out. They have to redeem lost prestige, but we are prepared for that."

Saturday's attack was the worst against the army since troops captured the rebel citadel of Jaffna on Dec. 2 after nearly 50 days of fighting that left some 500 soldiers and an estimated 2,000 rebels dead.

Defence officials said the LTTE was stepping up its

hit-and-run attacks in the east after the fall of Jaffna, the capital of a de facto state the rebels had run since 1990.

The army was currently gearing to withdraw troops from the Jaffna peninsula to re-deploy them in the east in a bid to take on guerrilla jungle bases in the region.

The military was training men on the use of new artillery guns and counter mortar systems to meet the rebel challenge, particularly in the eastern regions where Sinhalese and Muslim communities have been exposed to rebel attacks.

Scores of army camps in Batticaloa, Ampara and Trincomalee districts were dismantled just before the military launched its biggest offensive against the LTTE on Oct. 17 to take Jaffna.

With the army thinning out in the east, the LTTE was accused of killing at least 125 members of the majority Sinhalese community at six villages in the eastern region. Half way through the Jaffna offensive, the LTTE wiped out another army patrol in the Batticaloa district, killing at least 38 soldiers and wounding 24 on Nov. 24.

Less than two weeks later, the LTTE struck again in the same district, this time using a kamikaze-style bomber to lead a raid against an elite police commando unit to kill 23 constables and six civilians. The Tigers too lost 28.

There was no immediate word from the LTTE about the fighting but in a state-

ment from its London office, the Tigers said Hindu priests were praying Sunday to end the suffering of Tamils displaced in the north.

A three-hour special religious ceremony will be held across Hindu temples in areas under their control, the LTTE said in the one-page statement sent here from its London office.

"This is to get the blessings of gods to alleviate the untold miseries of the refugees and for a harmonious life for the people," the LTTE said. However, there was no immediate word from the LTTE about the latest fight in the east.

Most of Sri Lanka's minority Tamils are Hindus while the main religion of the majority Sinhalese community is Buddhism.

The LTTE is leading a guerrilla campaign for an independent homeland called Eelam. The separatist struggle has claimed more than 50,000 lives in the past 23 years.

The ferocious Tamil guerrilla ambush has raised the spectre of a renewed rebel hit-and-run campaign, defence officials and analysts said Sunday.

The rebel ambush revived grim memories of how marauding groups of Tigers mauled army patrols in the east three years ago, analysts said.

Security forces were planning major offensives in the east to destroy large groups of rebels who have infiltrated into the region and re-

grouped, the officials and analysts said.

An army officer said the army and paramilitary Special Task Force police commandos, backed by air force ground troops and police, planned a series of operations to flush the rebels from their jungle bases.

"The LTTE is planning to destabilise the east, especially Batticaloa, in a major way," he said.

"Our intelligence indicates that more than 1,000 terrorists have come to jungle bases in Vakara," he told Reuters. "The Tigers who carried out Saturday's ambush came from Vakara."

Vakara is south of the eastern port of Trincomalee.

A defence official said a two-storey building near the Vakara camp was equipped with satellite dish and communications antennae and was reported to be the office of the rebels' eastern leader Karikalan.

Security forces gained the upper hand in the east only by early 1994 after a protracted, low key counter-insurgency campaign.

The rebels have already launched a campaign of economic sabotage in the east by cutting power supplies and disrupting transport, defence officials said.

Other sources said the rebel campaign in the east could be a feint to draw troops away from Jaffna and pave the way for the Tigers to launch a big counter-attack to retake Jaffna town.



An aerial view from a helicopter of the forested area where the bodies of 16 members of the Solar Temple cult were found after an apparent mass suicide in France, where the gendarmes found the char-

Burned bodies of Solar Temple dead moved to French morgue

SAINT-PIERRE-DE-CHERENNES, France (R) — The burned bodies of 16 members of the Order of the Solar Temple found in a remote forest clearing have been transferred to a morgue in Grenoble for autopsies, police said Sunday.

Investigators said they hoped the post mortem examinations would tell them whether the cult members willingly committed collective suicide or whether some were murdered.

Officials said evidence so far suggested the deaths were a repeat of an October 1994 cult ritual in which 53 people died.

Some of the 1994 dead had plastic bags over their heads and had been injected with drugs or shot, raising the question whether they were killed or took their own lives.

The issue has never been resolved, but friends and associates said at least some of the surviving sect members had been upset that they were excluded from last year's mass deaths.

Throughout the night forensic experts scoured the remote plateau where the latest bodies were found, seeking clues.

The dead, including three children aged two, four and

six, were found Saturday after an intensive hunt.

Public Prosecutor Jean-Francois Loras told reporters that several weapons were found at the site.

The dead were found in a mountainous, thickly wooded area. The bodies were laid out in a star-shaped pattern, feet pointing to a fire at the centre.

The star formation was similar to one found when 23 cult members died in the Swiss village of Cheiry last year.

Cult experts said part of its lore was sun worship and laying the bodies out in this fashion meant dying in the shape of the sun, purified by fire.

Mr. Loras said the scene looked "like some kind of collective suicide."

"It was a painful, overwhelming sight," said Andre Romey, mayor of the tiny village of Saint-Pierre-De-Cherennes, after seeing the bodies. "Ours is a small, tranquil tourist village. We don't deserve this kind of publicity."

While French investigators worked at the site with help from three Swiss police inspectors, police in Geneva began gathering physical descriptions and dental records

of 10 missing cult members — eight of Swiss nationality and two French — who lived in Switzerland.

The remaining six bodies were presumed to be those of French nationals who lived in France.

"The formal identification of bodies has not yet begun," Urs Rechsteiner, head of security police, told reporters in Geneva.

Teams of experts will first simply locate the exact scene of the crime, then analyse each body and proceed to an autopsy, which will take a relatively long time.

Among the presumed dead were Edith Vuarnet, the wife of French 1960 Olympic downhill ski champion Jean Vuarnet, her son Patrick, his Swiss girlfriend and her six-year-old daughter.

Also believed dead were two French police officers, two architects, a nurse and a homeopath from the Swiss Vaud Canton.

The sect was believed to have disbanded after its leaders Jo Di Mambro and Luc Joutet were found among members who died at the Swiss villages of Granges-Sur-Salvan and Cheiry in October 1994. Other members of the cult died in Canada.

Cambodian prince exiled to France

PARIS (R) — Prince Norodom Sirivudh, the half-brother of Cambodia's King Norodom Sihanouk, arrived in France Sunday to begin life in exile, relatives told Reuters.

The 44-year-old Sirivudh, who agreed to go into exile rather than face trial on charges of plotting to assassinate co-Prime Minister Hun Sen, landed in Paris at about 7:00 a.m. (0600 GMT) aboard an Air France flight from Singapore.

On his arrival in Paris, Prince Sirivudh left the airport by a special exit with the help of French Foreign Ministry aides who had come to greet his flight so that he

could avoid journalists waiting for him at the airport. "We are very happy that he has arrived," his father-in-law Erik Affien told Reuters.

Prince Sirivudh planned to stay with him while he was in Paris. Mr. Affien said, and the prince's children were already at the house for the holidays.

Prince Sirivudh has denied plotting an assassination but accepted the exile proposal last week from King Sihanouk, who said he feared that if his half-brother stayed to fight the charges he might be killed.

Prince Sirivudh this week wrote to co-premiers Prince Norodom Ranariddh and

Hun Sen, the man he was accused of plotting to kill, thanking them for allowing him to leave the country and vowing not to play any further part in Cambodian politics.

He also pledged to steer clear of the opposition Khmer Nation Party run by his friend, former Finance Minister Sam Rainsy, who has loudly criticised the government.

The king had written to the co-premiers asking that Prince Sirivudh be released into his custody after nearly a month in detention at the Interior Ministry and said his relative would "permanently leave Cambodia for France."

Akayev predicts big win in Kyrgyz poll

BISHKEK (R) — Kyrgyzstan voted Sunday in driving snow in the Central Asian state's first contested leadership polls since independence and President Askar Akayev predicted big support for his market reforms.

Flanked by his family, a confident Akayev voted early in Bishkek and said he expected to win 60 per cent of ballots cast by the 2.3 million electorate in this remote ex-Soviet republic.

"The challengers are well-known, but I think their chances are very low," the balding former physicist told reporters.

"These elections are hugely important — they could change the course of our state," Mr. Akayev, 51, added.

Mr. Akayev has wide support as a conciliator after successfully quelling ethnic riots in 1990 and defeating a coup a year later which coincided with the headline putsch attempt in Moscow.

He led Kyrgyzstan to independence in 1991 and has since kept the peace between the once-nomadic Kyrgyz — who make up 58 per cent of the population of this landlocked mountain state — and the large Russian and Uzbek minorities.

Mr. Akayev is challenged by two top Soviet-era Communists — former Kyrgyz party leader Absamat Masaliev and ex-parliament Speaker Medetkhan Sherimkulov — both campaigning on similar platforms to woo those who have lost out from market reforms.

"The social situation is very serious and we must get out of this blind alley," Mr. Masaliev, 62, said after voting.

"We Communists started economic reforms, but now reforms are moving on a path which is not in the interests of the people."

One pensioner congratulated Mr. Masaliev at a chilly polling station in a Bishkek school. "There is no better system than socialism and there never will be," the Russian man said.

But few voters were enthusiastic about the challengers' plans to recreate the Soviet Union and keep the economy under state control. Nearly all of those spoken to backed Mr. Akayev.

"We are free but in a difficult situation," said 74-year-old Russian pensioner Klavdia Vlasova. "Things are expensive now but they are getting better."

Mr. Akayev stirred controversy by asking parliament

to call the polls a year before the end of his five-year term, but the last objections were thrown out by the courts Saturday.

He said the decision was final, adding, "in the United States could you question a Supreme Court decision?"

Mr. Sherimkulov said he would fight the decision further. "If Akayev wins I'll take him to the International Court," he said.

Heavy snow in Kyrgyzstan — over nine-tenths mountainous — could slow voting but is unlikely to drop turnout below the 50 per cent required to make the polls valid, analysts say.

Local election observers said they did not see any serious procedural violations. One foreign monitor did see some illegal family voting — when one person casts ballots on behalf of relatives — which could end up raising the turnout.

"It's a venal sin, but not that serious," she said.

Mr. Akayev pledged to restore growth next year, cut inflation and boost pensions. He said recent extra lending from the International Monetary Fund was a vote of confidence.

"If I win the course will continue," he told reporters.

Brother sister, separated by adoption, meet at age 67, 68

CHICAGO (AFP) — An American woman and her brother, adopted at the end of the 1920s by two families who concealed their roots, have met for the first time after a long, painstaking search. Edith Shelby was born in 1927 and her brother George Richardson the following year, the product of a mixed-race relationship. At the time, such relations and the resulting progeny made for a scandal in American society. On Friday, George, 67, of Lockport, Illinois, travelled to the Chicago Airport to greet his sister. Both burst into tears. "I'm 68 years old, and I never thought I'd have a brother in my life," explained Edith, a retiree in Kissimmee, Florida, and a widow and the mother of an adopted son. She formerly lived in New York and worked for a telephone company. "I was surprised that I was so nervous," said George, married and father of six. A former employee at Caterpillar, he now heads a real estate company in Joliet, Illinois. George began his quest at age 12 when, upon the death of his adoptive mother, he discovered a box of documents concerning his adoption. An attempt to track down his sister went nowhere in the 1940s. A few months ago, George tried again, contacting the group that had brokered his adoption, the Children's Home and Aid Society. The group set aside its rules of confidentiality and helped lead him to Florida. The last step — a phone call to set up the reunion — was one of the hardest for George. Would his sister want to see him after all this time? Could he survive rejection? Friday night in Chicago, the answer was clear. "You couldn't ask for a better Christmas," Shelby said between sobs.

820m wagered on Japan grand prix horse race

TOKYO (R) — Millions of Japanese punters wagered a record 82 billion yen (\$820 million) on Sunday's year-ending grand prix horse race, racing officials said. They said the sales of betting tickets for the Arima Kinen (Memorial) Race totalled 81,990,894,000 yen, a record signal race sales of betting tickets in Japan. The previous record of 78.8 billion yen (\$788 million) was set in the same race in 1993. At least eight people were slightly injured in a stampede which took place at an off-course betting office in Osaka, western Japan, after the 2.5-kilometre race, a Fire Department spokesman told Reuters. The turf race, watched by a packed crowd of some 160,000 at Nakayama Racecourse, outskirts of Tokyo, was won by 12-1 long shot Mayano Top Gun, a three-year-old colt which also won this year's Japanese St Leger.

Inflated salaries kill Carita beauty salon

PARIS (AP) — Carita, the posh beauty salon catering to the rich and famous, is closing its doors at the end of the month, no longer able to shell out fat checks to overpaid coiffeurs. "Too expensive, our hairdressers had become too expensive," Carita President Alain Michel told the daily Liberation. "When the best hairdresser brought in 100 francs (\$20) of revenue, he cost me 128 francs (\$26)." A landmark on the Ternes Faubourg Saint-Honore shopping street since it was founded in 1947, the salon has coiffed and powdered the likes of Jane Mansfield, Brigitte Bardot, Catherine Deneuve, Ursula Andress, Natalie Wood — and even Marlon Brando. The salon, which employs about 40 hairdressers, is to reopen in six months in renovated quarters as an "anti-stress" centre, with the emphasis on massage and the latest health and beauty treatments. Mr. Michel blames the inflated salaries of his "star" coiffeurs for driving Carita into the ground. Top hairdressers earn base salaries of about 25,000 francs (\$5,000) per month, plus a percentage of total revenues and flat fees for basic services such as hair cuts, permanents and dye jobs. With tips and fees earned outside the salons in private homes and TV studios touching up anchors and special guests, the stars can boost their monthly incomes to nearly 100,000 francs (\$20,000).

N.Korean soldier defects to South

SEOUL (AFP) — A North Korean army soldier has defected to South Korea across the demilitarised zone (DMZ), where tension has been heightened by massive exercises on both sides, Defence Ministry officials here said.

The defector walked across an eastern extension of the DMZ into a South Korean frontline post Saturday and identified himself as private first class Choe Kwang-Hyok, 25, the officials said. Choe was in North Korean army uniform but carried no weapon, they said.

He was the first North Korean soldier to defect through the heavily fortified border since a Northern army commando was shot dead on the southern side of the DMZ in October.

The defection coincided with a North Korean press report that the country's armed forces and civilians were on alert against possible provocations by South Korean and U.S. troops.

On Saturday, the North's mouthpiece Korean Central News Agency (KCNA) quoted Vice Marshal Jo Myong-Rok as "appealing to

officers... to be on red alert with a high degree of revolutionary vigilance."

"The present situation prompts the officers and men of our people's army and our people to be on maximum alert," the KCNA report said, warning that North Koreans would fight to the finish if "the enemy dare unleash a new war."

"Intelligent rhetoric has been frequent across the DMZ this month, with both North and South Korean troops conducting massive winter training."

India charges Latvians, Briton with sedition

BOMBAY (AFP) — Five Latvians and a Briton have been charged with sedition in connection with the mysterious air-drop of a large consignment of weapons over eastern India last week, police here said Sunday.

Officials in the eastern city of Calcutta said meanwhile that they believe the weapons were intended for an outlawed Hindu sect, the Ananda Marg, which is based in the area.

Manish Gupta, home secretary of West Bengal state, told AFP that raids had been staged on the headquarters of the Ananda Marg, or "Happy Path," in the West Bengal district of Purulia, where villagers found the weapons Monday.

The secretive Ananda Marg, which is based in the town of Anandanagar, 15 kilometres from where the weapons came down, was banned 23 years ago for involvement in ritual sacrifice and most of its leaders arrested.

The Press Trust of India said the raid by police and paramilitary officers on Ananda Marg Headquarters in Anandanagar Saturday night had not turned up any weapons.

The mysterious consignment of arms, including more than 300 assault rifles, rocket launchers, anti-tank grenades and 20,000 rounds of ammunition worth up to \$10 million was found by villagers in Purulia district Monday.

Police suspect some firearms may be still missing and have warned villagers in the area to turn them in or face a house-to-house search.

Police here said the six "mercenaries" on the transport plane forced to land here by Indian Air Force MiG fighters Friday while on a flight from Karachi had confessed to dropping the consignment of weapons.

They said the Russian-made AN-26 transport plane had been impounded and the six crew members charged with sedition, which carries the death sentence, and violating the arms act.

Detectives are searching for a seventh member of the crew, a New Zealander identified as K. Peter Davy, the owner of the Hong Kong-registered plane who gave airport police the slip after the aircraft was forced down.

Bombay Police Commissioner Ramdeo Tyagi identified the arrested crew members as Captain A. Klushin, O. Gaidash, I. Moskutan, I. Timmerman and I. Antimenko all holders of Latvian passports.

Anti-nuclear rally held in Tokyo against French tests, Japan reactor

TOKYO (AFP) — More than 100 people rallied here Sunday, denouncing both French nuclear testing and Japan's fast-breeder reactor programme which has been marred by an explosive leak of sodium coolant at a prototype plant.

Fears persisted over the safety of Japan's nuclear programme the day after four senior officials lost their jobs at the fast-breeder reactor Monju plant for allegedly covering up crucial information about the Dec. 8 accident.

"Stop nuclear tests and Monju as well," the demonstrators shouted as they marched in the bustling entertainment district of Shibuya

after the rally in a park led by the Japanese Congress against Atomic and Hydrogen Bombs.

Police estimated the turnout at about 140.

"French nuclear testing and Japan's nuclear reactors are a series of things linked by plutonium," the demonstrators said. Some of them later went to the French embassy in Tokyo to demand a halt to nuclear tests at the South Pacific atoll of Mururoa.

A fast-breeder reactor produces more plutonium than it consumes but questions about its safety have led many countries to abandon projects to develop one. Another concern is the possible use of

plutonium to produce atomic bombs, and its environmental impact.

The four Monju officials were given new posts, mostly lower in stature, at other facilities of the Power Reactor and Nuclear Development Corp. (DONEN) which operates the reactor at the plant by Isuruga Bay in Fukui near Kyoto.

They included Tadao Takahashi, one of DONEN's seven directors. On Friday, the State Agency of Science and Technology, which oversees the state-affiliated DONEN, said the plant's management had kept secret a 10-minute videotape taken by its staff shortly after the leak.

Bangladesh opposition leader agrees to talk to Khaleda in live broadcast

DHAKA (AFP) — Bangladesh's main opposition leader has agreed to hold a televised meeting with Prime Minister Khaleda Zia to end the country's crippling political crisis, political sources said Sunday.

Sheikh Hasina Wajed had previously said she would only hold talks as "equals" once Mrs. Khaleda had resigned.

"I am ready to hold talks with the prime minister to work out ways for forming a neutral caretaker government in the interest of the nation as well as to ensure freedom of voting for the people," Mrs. Hasina was quoted as saying by a spokesman of her Awami League party.

The meeting must be broadcast live on state-run television and radio, Mrs. Hasina said.

Mrs. Khaleda, acting as interim prime minister after parliament was dissolved last month, has attacked opposition demands for her resignation as unconstitutional but

repeatedly urged her main political rival to negotiate.

A senior leader of Mrs. Khaleda's ruling Bangladesh National Party (BNP) welcomed Mrs. Hasina's proposal, saying: "It is definitely a good sign."

"Good sense is going to prevail over emotion... Coverage of political events by the state media is absolutely under the control of the Election Commission now," said BNP Assistant Secretary-General and Works Minister Rafiqul Islam Mia.

The 20-month opposition campaign has led to 26 general strikes this year, hurting the economy and threatening this volatile South Asian country's fragile democracy.

The opposition has called for a 48-hour nationwide general strike from Jan. 3 and a road, railway and water blockade on Dec. 30 as part of its campaign.

The independent newspaper said it appeared that Mrs. Hasina had "sprung a surprise" and a new strategy. "But whether this new bottom line would provide the

desired silver lining in the overcast political horizons remains to be seen," it cautioned.

Chief Election Commissioner Justice A.K.M. Sadeque, was not immediately available for comment. He has warned that unless national elections are held as scheduled on Feb. 7 the political situation will be "terrible."

The polls were rescheduled last week for Feb. 7 from Jan. 18 after the ruling BNP and some 60 other minor political parties requested the change. Meanwhile, news reports said David Merrill, the United States ambassador in Dhaka, continued to meet senior government and opposition leaders to end the country's political crisis.

Security forces launched a drive against illegal weapons four days ahead of voting. They had so far seized 250 guns, 798 home-made bombs and arrested 2,115 suspected "terrorists and criminals," the Election Commission said.



This file photo shows Haiti's former Prime Minister Rene Preval greeted by supporters in Limbe, Haiti, during his presidential election campaign. Haitian electoral officials

announced that Mr. Preval was the official winner of the elections (AFP photo)

Preval takes Haiti presidency with landslide

PORT-AU-PRINCE (R) — Rene Preval was declared the winner of Haiti's presidential election Saturday, swamping his opponents with a giant 89 per cent of the popular vote, according to the official results.

Second to Mr. Preval, who represents the Lavalas Party of outgoing President Jean-Bertrand Aristide, was independent candidate Leon Jeanne with only 2.5 per cent and third was Victor Benoit of the Konakom Party with 2.3 per cent.

But Mr. Preval's widely-predicted landslide was tempered by a meagre turnout of less than 28 per cent, accord-

ing to the results released by the Provisional Electoral Council (CEP).

The poor showing in last Sunday's election has prompted Mr. Preval's rivals to cry foul, and at least three of his 13 opponents have gone on record to question the legitimacy of the vote.

Mr. Preval, in a conciliatory speech following the official declaration, said he respected both those who voted and those who did not.

Addressing a news conference by candlelight because of a power cut, Mr. Preval implied that those who stayed away were nevertheless the supporters of his party, but

would have preferred Mr. Aristide to stay in power.

"Some had reason to choose five years, and some had reason to reclaim the three years the putschists stole. (But) they are all for Lavalas," he said.

Many Lavalas supporters had called on Mr. Aristide to stay in office for three more years to make up for the time he spent in exile after being deposed in a coup. But the constitution prevents him from standing for a second consecutive term.

Haiti's presidential election was monitored by teams of international observers

who pronounced the balloting peaceful and without fraud.

Mr. Preval inherits a deeply-divided country emerging from decades of brutal dictatorship and will have until the year 2000 to rebuild the country's shattered institutions and crumbling economy.

The issue of maintaining an international security presence beyond February, when a U.N. peacekeeping mandate expires, is one decision requiring the incoming president's swift attention. He takes over from Mr. Aristide on Feb. 7.

Pakistan expels Afghan diplomat

ISLAMABAD (Agencies) — Pakistan Sunday ordered the Afghan consul-general in the northwestern city of Peshawar to leave the country within 48 hours, accusing him of spying.

A Foreign Ministry statement said Musa Khan had been declared "persona non grata for his activities incompatible with his status," a diplomatic jargon for spying.

It gave no details of the alleged activities of the consul. The action follows the expulsion of 19 other Afghan diplomats and 12 non-diplomats in September and October.

Pakistan did not give reasons for the previous expulsions, which were ordered after Afghan demonstrators burned the Pakistan embassy in Kabul in September, killed an embassy employee and beat up the ambassador and other staff.

The new expulsion was ordered three days after a car bomb in Peshawar killed 42 people and wounded more than 100.

Some police officials have said they suspect the bombing could be the work of hostile Afghans in the city, but no one has been charged.

Pakistan has not reopened its Kabul embassy since the September incident. However, earlier this month Pakistani Ambassador to Afghanistan Qazi Humayun opened an office in the eastern Afghan town of Jalalabad, a move regretted by Kabul.

Pakistan's relations with Afghanistan are now at their lowest point since President Burhanuddin Rabbani took power a few months after the fall of a pro-Communist regime in Kabul in April, 1992.

The Afghan government accuses Pakistan of backing the opposition Taliban Islamic Movement, which has besieged Kabul and is seeking to topple Mr. Rabbani. Pakistan denies the charge.

Meanwhile, Pakistani Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto vowed to rid this country of terrorism, while visiting hospitalised victims of last week's car bombing, which left about 60 people dead.

Before meeting the wounded, Ms. Bhutto inspected Peshawar's central market where the bomb exploded last Thursday, the second devastating terrorist attack in Pakistan in five weeks. Some 200 people were injured in the Peshawar bombing.

Ms. Bhutto said the federal and provincial governments would spare no effort to trace the perpetrators responsible for the "national tragedy."

Consoling an injured teenager whose father works in Saudi Arabia, Ms. Bhutto told him: "You should not consider yourself alone. I am with you."

The North West Frontier Province observed a day of mourning Saturday for the victims of the blast.

According to rescue workers, ambulance services and news reports the explosion killed 60 people and injured about 200 others.

However, the official media said the confirmed casualty toll was 42 dead and 100 injured.

On Nov. 19, the Egyptian embassy in Islamabad was destroyed in a suicide bombing in which 17 people were killed and 60 injured. Al Jihad, a Muslim militant group from Egypt, claimed responsibility for the November attack.

However, no one has claimed to be behind the Peshawar bombing, and the authorities have not directly blamed anyone or announced any arrests, although dozens of Afghans have been interrogated by investigators.

The Afghan government denied that saboteurs from Kabul could have been involved in the blast.

In a separate development, two people were wounded when police opened fire to disperse hundreds of Kashmiri youths demonstrating against the presence of Afghans in Muzaffarabad, police and witnesses said.

The incident took place Sunday at Rawalakot, a town near the border between Pakistani and Indian-controlled parts of Kashmir, as members of the Jammu and Kashmir National Students Federation (JKNSA) staged the protest.

Witnesses said police first lobbed tear-gas shells when the demonstrators started throwing rocks at the police.

Russians report killing 50 Chechen separatists

MOSCOW (AFP) — Russian forces said they had killed around 50 Chechen separatists in fighting near Vedeno, in the south of the Russian breakaway republic, Interfax News Agency reported Sunday.

The battle lasted seven hours Saturday, the agency said, without specifying Russian casualties.

Fighting broke out when around 100 Chechens attacked a Russian reconnaissance unit in the mountainous region, which is still held by the separatists almost a year since Moscow sent in its troops to crush an independence bid.

The new fighting has flared in the Caucasus republic over the Dec. 17 local leadership elections, organised by Moscow and boycotted by the separatists.

Fighting was also continuing Sunday in Gudermes, where Russian forces, after several abortive attempts, had succeeded Saturday in recapturing the railway station seized in a rebel offensive on Dec. 14.

Russian forces freed 130 Russian Interior Ministry

troops, the ITAR-TASS news agency reported.

ITAR-TASS had reported earlier that 70 soldiers had been pinned down.

Chechen military Commander Aslan Maskhadov said the operation to seize Gudermes had been aimed at discrediting the Russian-organised Chechen leadership elections, which returned Moscow-installed Prime Minister Doku Zavgayev to power.

Russian forces have barred journalists from Gudermes, so that the only independent reports have been from fleeing residents, who have reported seeing about 100 bodies strewn in the streets.

Other fighting Sunday lasted more than two hours near Sernovodsk, west of Grozny, on the border between Chechnya and neighbouring Ingushetia, where separatists attacked a Russian checkpoint, the army press service said. It did not report casualties.

The army press service reported however that two Russians were killed and 10 wounded in the past 24 hours throughout the republic.

Each side has habitually exaggerated the losses of its adversary and minimised its own.

Russian forces invaded Chechnya on Dec. 11, 1994, to quell the separatist regime of Dzhokhar Dudayev.

At least 30,000 people, mostly civilians, have been killed in the war despite a ceasefire agreed in June. Separatists have continued guerrilla operations and retained several bastions in the south.

Refugees were reported to be flooding into the Chechen capital Grozny Sunday to escape fighting in Gudermes.

ITAR-TASS News Agency quoted a senior official from the Moscow-installed Chechen government as saying that several hundred refugees had already poured into Grozny from Gudermes.

Two refugee centres had been set up and first aid was being given to the wounded, First Deputy Prime Minister Sanaki Arbiev told the agency.

TASS said Russian troops were continuing an operation to clear Gudermes of separatist rebels.



Mauricio Reyes, 19, one of the four survivors of the crash of American Airlines Flight 965 remains in critical condition at the intensive care unit of the Cali University Hospital in Cali, Colombia (AFP photo)

Search for Colombia air crash victims almost over

BUGA, Colombia (R) — Rescue workers Saturday almost completed their grim task of plucking bodies from the wreckage of a U.S. airliner that slammed into a mountain in southwest Colombia, recovering 143 of the 160 victims.

Officials said 70 bodies had been identified so far. Rescue operations by helicopter at the remote crash site, nearly 12,000 feet (4,000 metres) up in the Andes, were suspended at around 5:00 p.m. (2200 GMT) due to thick fog, but will resume Sunday at daybreak, civil defence officials said.

"We have now identified 70 people, and it wasn't too difficult because most of them were intact," said William Duarte, spokesman for the prosecutor general's office.

Rescue workers vowed to continue the search for the 17 missing bodies who were on board the American Airlines Boeing 757 that ploughed into a mountain outside Cali Wednesday night.

Only four people, and a small dog named "Milagro" or "Miracle" by a rescue worker who found her amid twisted parts of the plane's fuselage Friday, survived the crash. The airliner was carrying 156 passengers and a crew of eight.

The four, whose survival doctors called exceptional, are conscious and expected to make a full recovery, Cali University Hospital officials said.

Three of them — Gonzalo Dussan, 37, from New Jersey, his six-year-old daughter Michelle, and Mauricio Reyes, 19, a business student at University of Michigan, Detroit — should be able to leave hospital within two weeks, head of intensive care unit Luis Fernando Castro said.

The fourth survivor, Liliana Mercedes Ramirez, 21, was in critical but stable condition Saturday, Dr. Castro told Reuters. She underwent two operations to remove two thirds of her large intestine she also suffered a fractured right leg.

Ms. Ramirez, a finance student at Kansas City University whose parents died in the crash, told her cousin

Andrea the little she remembered from the accident.

Sitting next to Reyes on row 16 in the central part of the aircraft, "she grabbed Mauricio and they held hands tightly," when they felt the plane shaking, the relative told Reuters outside the intensive care unit. "When they came to, he used a yellow towel to wave it at rescue helicopters."

Reyes' older brother, Juan Carlos, a 34-year-old surgeon who rescued his brother after rushing to the remote site of the crash, said that Mauricio at first was unable to speak.

When he saw his parents at his bedside, he scribbled on a piece of paper: "Mom, Dad... I am scared. What happened to little Mercedes."

Dr. Castro, the hospital official, said their survival was "probably a unique case in medical history after an accident of that magnitude."

At least 46 U.S. citizens are believed to have died in the crash of Flight 965, en

route from Miami, which occurred four minutes before its scheduled landing at Cali, Colombia's third largest city and headquarters of the Cali drug cartel.

The Colombian government has ruled out terrorism as the possible cause of the worst air crash in the country's history.

"There are no signs that a terrorist attack occurred against American Airlines Flight 965," Foreign Minister Rodrigo Pardo said in a statement issued Friday night.

He said authorities had confirmed that the plane was "several miles" off course when the crash happened in clear weather, but cautioned against wild speculation pending results of an official inquiry.

Confirming local media reports, Colombia's Civil Aviation Authority head Alvaro Cala said the plane was 13 miles (21 km) off course when it slammed into the San Jose Mountain.



Michelle Dussen, 7, remains in critical condition at the intensive care unit of the Cali University Hospital in Colombia. She was one of the survivors of the Boeing 757 jet which crashed into Mount San Jose near Buga, north of Cali (AFP photo)

Death toll in Indian fire reaches 400

DABWALI, India (R) — Anguished parents searched through rows of charred bodies for their children Sunday after a flash fire tore through a school prize-giving in a small north Indian town, killing at least 400 people.

"The number of deaths is definitely going to go up. We are receiving news of only deaths," senior district official J.C. Bhargava told Reuters at the packed Dabwali Hospital in Haryana state about 250 kilometres north-west of Delhi.

He said at least 400 bodies had been recovered from the scene of the fire Saturday at the Rajiv Marriage Palace, a brick-walled and tent-topped structure used to hold wedding ceremonies and other functions in the town.

At least 120 people were being treated at the hospital in Dabwali and other medical centres nearby for burns.

Tractors from farms of the agriculturally-rich area were used to transport bodies to the crematorium where they were cremated with the help of truckloads of wood. A

large farm near the crematorium was converted into a makeshift cremation site.

Bangwarial Angi, a senior official at the crematorium, said more than 400 bodies had been cremated since 5 p.m. Saturday. "We broke all (Hindu) practices by cremating family members on the same pyre (instead of individual ones)," he said.

No one was in a mood to strictly follow religious laws, he said. Up to 200 bodies, mostly of children, had not been identified, he said.

Officials made a public appeal to register the dead to help count the dead and missing.

Mr. Angi was in Dabwali to oversee relief operations to replace his colleague Somnath Kamboj, who was among the dead. Rows of charred corpses, many little more than skeletons, lay on the grass outside the Dabwali Hospital Sunday.

Mourning parents and municipal workers were wrapping the bodies in white cotton shrouds to take them to the crematorium.

Witnesses said the Day-

anand Anglo Vedic (DAV) School prize-giving had almost finished when the blaze ripped through the tented hall.

"Within three to four minutes after the fire broke out, it was all over," police official Naresh Kumar said.

A jute bag trader, Om Prakash Goel lost all his family members, his wife, five children and two sisters. "Why has God not taken me?" he asked.

Police said they suspected a fault in an electrical circuit or the bursting of a cooking gas cylinder had caused the fire.

Prime Minister P.V. Narasimha Rao expressed shock. The Haryana government declared three days of mourning and ordered an inquiry into the fire.

Domestic news agencies said some people had died in a stampede after the fire broke out, but witnesses said the blaze had spread so quickly that victims had no time to react.

"The heat was so much, the children couldn't even cry," said Mr. Kumar. "Only one fire engine was

there as a precaution. By the time the fourth fire engine came it was all over."

Mr. Kumar said he had personally helped 30 children to safety.

A local journalist said that 20 of the 25 teachers at the DAV School had died in the blaze.

The United Nations of India (UNDI) said government jobs would be provided to a family member of each dead victim. The state government would grant 100,000 rupees (\$2,860) to families of the dead, and 50,000 rupees to those seriously injured.

The venue, decorated with synthetic silk cloth, had seating for 1,000, but many more had crowded in. A police official said the synthetic cloth had probably caused the fire to flare up.

The fire disaster compared with one China last January, when a blaze in a cinema hall killed some 323 people, including 288 children, in the Xinjiang province.

India's last major disaster was in August, when 350 people died in a train accident in the northern city of Ferozabad.

Seoul prosecutors grill Chun's relatives

SEOUL (R) — South Korean prosecutors have started grilling relatives of disgraced former President Chun Doo Hwan about alleged secret slush funds he accumulated while in office, a Seoul prosecution official said Sunday.

An official at the Seoul prosecutors' office said prosecutors Saturday called in Hong Sun-Du, Mr. Chun's brother-in-law by marriage, over allegations he was involved in stashing away the retired army general's slush money.

The official declined to give more information but state radio quoted prosecutors as saying Lee Chang-Sok, brother of Mr. Chun's wife Lee Soon-Ja, was also grilled Saturday whether he helped Mr. Chun hide secret millions.

Prosecutors were also quoted by the radio as saying other relatives by marriage of Mr. Chun — now in a police hospital and already charged in another case — were under questioning over similar allegations.

Mr. Chun is alleged to have amassed 300 billion to 400 billion won (\$390 million-\$520 million) during his 1980-88 term in office.

Prosecutors said the actual amount Mr. Chun is alleged to have stashed away was smaller than what his successor Roh Tae-Woo, in detention on bribery charges, was admitted to amassing, but the

value was "much higher" when inflation was taken into account.

Mr. Chun is also alleged to have hidden a huge amount of illicit funds in real estate and bonds under the names of relatives.

News reports have said Mr. Chun was expected to be indicted on bribery charges on Dec. 29.

On Thursday Mr. Chun was indicted on separate charges of mutiny for masterminding a 1979 coup that was followed in May 1980 by the army's massacre of pro-democracy rebels in the city of Kwangju. Nearly 200 people were killed by official count but Kwangju residents say the death toll is much higher.

Mr. Chun was expected to spend Christmas in the police hospital under heavy guard after being rushed from his jail cell Wednesday night. He has been on a hunger strike since his arrest on Dec. 3.

He has refused intravenous feeding, suffering dehydration, malnutrition and low blood pressure, a hospital official said Sunday. "His condition is getting worse as he is still drinking only barley tea," the official said. Mr. Chun is 64 years old.

Late Saturday, he was questioned in the hospital by prosecutors over the slush fund allegations, the domestic Yonhap News Agency said. The questioning lasted

only for 20 minutes because of his bad condition, it said.

Along with Mr. Chun, Mr. Roh was also charged with playing a "key role" in the mutiny by pulling troops under his command off the border with North Korea to back the putsch leaders.

Mr. Roh had already been indicted and formally charged with accepting \$369 million from 35 business conglomerates after confessing that he built up \$54 million during his 1988-93 tenure. His trial on bribery charges started last Monday.

Both were also charged with murder and attempted murder for attacks on superior officers and with ordering military units mobilised without authorisation.

Mutiny and murder both carry the death penalty in South Korea, although political analysts believe the disgraced former presidents will receive long prison sentences, likely to be commuted after a few years.

Current President Kim Young-Sam set the stage for the mutiny indictments by ordering a special law aimed at punishing his two predecessors. Last week parliament passed the law which he called for to open the door to legal action.

Since Mr. Kim's order for the law, prosecutors have been grilling dozens of former military leaders and former cabinet ministers to find

out their roles in the coup or look into the circumstances that led to the Kwangju massacre.

Meanwhile news reports said Sunday the daughter of detained former South Korean President Roh Tae-Woo may be charged over the \$192.500 she allegedly placed in U.S. banks in 1990.

Mr. Roh's 34-year-old daughter, Roh So-Young, admitted under interrogation last week that she received the money from Mr. Roh during his visit to Seattle in December 1989, which followed a European tour via Switzerland.

But she denied any knowledge of Swiss bank accounts opened by her father.

The questioning of Mr. Roh's daughter was part of a probe to trace Mr. Roh's suspected Swiss bank accounts on top of the \$650 million the ex-president admitted to raising while in office from 1988 to 1993.

Prosecutors suspect the money Mr. Roh handed to his daughter came from a Swiss bank. But they are also looking into possibilities that Mr. Roh took the money from home or collected it from donations by businessmen during his 1989 trip to Europe.

"I understand the money had been withdrawn from a Swiss bank," a prosecutor told Yonhap News Agency.

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Xmas, on happier note

THIS YEAR'S Christmas is certainly a happier occasion, now that Israel has finally withdrawn its army from Bethlehem and the Palestinians have assumed control over the city. Still, the liberation of the birthplace of Jesus Christ would not be complete till all the geographic environs surrounding it and the other Palestinian cities from which Israel is yet to withdraw are also free of Israeli occupation. As long as Bethlehem, Nablus, Tulkarem, Jenin and Ramallah remain only liberated ghettos or enclaves, the Palestinian question which is admittedly the core issue in the Arab-Israeli conflict would remain unresolved. As long as the lifelines of the self-governing Palestinian areas remain at the mercy of Israeli troops, the situation is unlikely to augur well for the future.

But if what has been achieved on the Palestinian front could be seen as only a part of a continuous process that would culminate in freeing all the West Bank and East Jerusalem, then the Palestinians would have a good reason to be optimistic and hopeful, in a prelude to full restoration of their rights over their homeland.

With the Palestinian National Authority (PNA) taking over in place in Bethlehem, however, the leadership must demonstrate that it can deliver on its long-standing promise to keep order, security and stability not only during the religious celebrations marking Christmas but also in the months and years ahead. Bethlehem occupies a special and central place for Christianity. The last thing that the PNA would wish to portray to the international community is that there is a threat to the Christian dimension and character of the city.

The fact that Elias Freij is the mayor of the city and leader of his community is ample evidence that the Palestinian people offer a fine example of not only religious coexistence and tolerance between Muslims and Christians but also deep-rooted bonds that withstood the test of time. There is nothing more than the people can be proud of than their total and unequivocal rejection of all forms of discrimination. This has been the hallmark of the Palestinian movement right from the start, and we therefore expect Bethlehem to serve as a shining example for what we expect in the immediate future and beyond. May this Christmas be the harbinger of not only a successful Palestinian self-rule but also national unification on every level.

ARABIC PRESS COMMENTARIES

CONDEMNING AMERICA and the West for maintaining their sanctions on Iraq can do no good to the Iraqi people who are living a tragedy, said Sultan Al Hartab, a writer in Al Ra'i Sunday. For this reason, Jordan is transcending slogans and is dedicating its efforts to finding a way for lifting the sanctions and at the same time safeguarding the territorial integrity of Iraq, said the writer. We cannot leave the Iraqis to face death and we cannot shirk our responsibilities towards our kinsmen and therefore, we are calling on the various Iraqi factions to reconcile because without a general agreement among the various groups there can be no solution to the tragedy, added the writer. It must be stressed, said the writer, that Iraq remains threatened and facing disintegration, and our duty is to call on its people to opt for reconciliation and end their differences for the sake of protecting the nation and preventing its demise, said the writer. The Arabs who criticise Jordan's call are turning their backs to Iraq and abandoning their brothers and sisters in that country and are in effect trying to escape from their duty, said the writer. He said that the Arab World should encourage reconciliation efforts because only through peace and dialogue can the opposition and the regime in Baghdad reach a satisfactory formula for the future of their country.

The View from Fourth Circle

Iraq, Jordan, gondoliers, and the bazaar of the bizarre

THE QUESTION of whether or not Jordan should instigate and host a meeting of Iraqi opposition groups in order to try to help pave the way for better days in Iraq has not received the kind of analytical, long-term strategic analysis that it deserves, given the importance of the subject. The statements earlier this week by His Majesty King Hussein and members of the government that the meeting is not yet finalised should be taken as a signal for a constructive and honest debate about the pros and cons of such a meeting.

There are good and bad reasons for Jordan to host a meeting of the Iraqi opposition, but the bad reasons far outweigh the good ones, and should cause us to ponder this issue with great prudence. The possible reasons for hosting such a meeting from the perspective of Jordan, as far as I can tell, could include the following:

It is in Jordan's and the Arab world's strategic interests to work for the unity of Iraq and to prevent its dismemberment.

It is our moral obligation to work for the wellbeing of Iraq by trying to end the suffering of the Iraqi people.

It is in Jordan's economic self-interest to position itself favourably with the Iraqi people so that we benefit from the post-Saddam reconstruction of the country.

It is important to show the people of Iraq that they have not been forgotten and that their fellow Arabs are still seeking ways of coming to their rescue.

It is in Jordan's long-term interest to work for an evolution towards a more humane and reasonable regime in Baghdad, because of our sincere wish to promote the human rights of all Arabs.

It is in Jordan's long-term interest to work for an evolution towards a more humane and reasonable regime in Baghdad, so that we can derive geo-political and other benefits from the United States, the Gulf oil producers, Israel and others around the world who would like to see a new and more reasonable political leadership in Iraq.

These reasons for hosting a meeting of the Iraqi opposition, are all flawed and weak reasons that should be dismissed by a more honest and critical analysis of the real pros and cons of the matter at hand. The reasons that argue against holding such a meeting, to my mind, are as follows:

The Iraqi opposition is one of the least credible and ineffective political movements in the 20th century. It is unable to agree amongst its own component groups on a long-term political strategy for the country, has very little credible, on-the-ground capacity inside Iraq, and seems to have no chance of changing the present Iraqi regime. It is riddled with money and logistical support from foreign intelligence agencies, and two of its key players — the leading Kurdish parties of Messrs Barzani and Talabani — spend more time fighting each other than working together for the future wellbeing of Iraq. One of the self-appointed leaders of the Iraqi opposition, Ahmad Chalabi, is wanted in Jordan on criminal charges of financial fraud, and has been tried and found guilty by a Jordanian court. Some of the individual elements within the Iraqi opposition are credible, honourable and decent people, but collectively the opposition is a hollow bag. For Jordan to associate itself openly with this predominantly rag-tag band of exiles and opportunists would be more harmful to the Jordanian people than it would be helpful to the Iraqi people.

Our humanitarian concern and moral commitment to the people of Iraq is best served by working with others to try to improve the conditions inside Iraq. The fact that the Iraqi leadership has not listened to our good advice in this respect should prompt us to seek more effective, realistic and multilateral means of alleviating the suffering of Iraqis. If we want to host anything, we should host a series of international meetings of relief agencies, governments, humanitarian aid agencies and others around the world who can work together and with the Iraqi government to alleviate the worst suffering endured by Iraqis, especially the most vulnerable women and children. If it is true that the U.N. embargo against Iraq is not meant to hurt the Iraqi people, then our single most constructive contribution to the wellbeing of the Iraqi people would be to explore vigorously how we can translate this principle into action.

Jordan has acted with much honour, compassion and law-abiding legality in its dealings with the people and government of Iraq in recent years. We tried unsuccessfully to prevent the Gulf war catastrophe through mediation, and we resisted attempts by others to have us close our borders with Iraq because we wanted to remain as a legal conduit for food and medicine into Iraq. Our government has tried repeatedly to talk with the Baghdad regime and our people have expressed their support for the Iraqi people many times over. There is simply no need for Jordan to bend over backwards to try and prove its continuing concern for the Iraqi nation and people, because we have done that many times over in recent years, and our concern is not in doubt in any way. If we want to help, we should do so by focusing our energies on increased humanitarian relief as the only realistic opening in the short term — for which the Iraqi people will express their gratitude when they are free to do so one day in the future.

Our experience with Hussein Kamel should have been an important lesson about what happens when we allow ourselves to become too closely involved with the band of assorted political gondoliers who sail around the murky waters of Iraqi politics, singing the tunes that will earn them money, political support, interviews on CNN and BBC, and other peculiar forms of false and delusional assets in our contemporary bazaar of the bizarre. Jordan's initially close association with Hussein Kamel has been

have been a conspiracy. The film begins with a long-shot lasting 10 minutes or so of the parking lot attached to the Kings of Israel Square (now Yitzhak Rabin Square) where Rabin was killed immediately after a peace rally held in the square. It shows a figure clad in loose black clothes standing around, loitering in fact, Yigal Amir himself. Not talking to anyone and not being spoken to by anyone.

This was an absolutely extraordinary circumstance, because that whole area was supposed to have been closed off to the public except those with special passes which Amir did not have. The parking area should have been completely empty of people other than the ministers' drivers and guards. But the film shows that it was full, with 50-60 persons milling around. And yet no one, not a civilian

or a policeman or a soldier, asked the young man what he was doing hanging around suspiciously on the fringes of what has become a very controversial event. At one point Amir is seen taking his ease, leaning against a large flower basin, with his legs crossed, strangely insouciant, considering that he had on his person a deadly weapon, a pistol with dum-dum bullets, which even a most cursory search would have revealed. Was all this because Amir knew that his killing was going to be "an inside job" and that he was not going to be questioned or searched? The next suspicion-raising circumstance is seen on the film when the bodyguard covering Rabin's back moved away sideways and to the front, leaving the premier's back exposed with Yigal Amir in the knot of people

It is in Jordan's long-term interest to work for an evolution towards a more humane and reasonable regime in Baghdad, because of our sincere wish to promote the human rights of all Arabs.

slightly embarrassing, perhaps even detrimental to our national credibility. A larger, more open Jordanian association with the entire Iraqi opposition will compound this awkwardness many times over, bringing us few if any benefits and only further tensions domestically and regionally.

The idea that by courting the Iraqi opposition and working for a better Iraqi governance system we will gain benefits from Arab, Israeli, American and international quarters strikes me as insulting and demeaning to Jordan, and politically naive. If we allow ourselves to be used for the interests of others, we will also be abused and abandoned when we no longer serve a utilitarian function in the strategies of others (remember how the Kurds in Iran and Iraq were used by Arab, Israeli, American and other governments in the 1970s and 80s; what has that achieved for them today?). If we try to play a role in reordering Iraq that is beyond our capabilities, it will only aggravate our already problematic relations with major Arab powers such as Egypt and Syria, who have already interpreted our policy as a Jordanian attempt to grab power and influence in Iraq, if not to restore the Hashemite throne there. Though we deny these alleged motives twice daily, the fact remains that our sole attempts to help the Iraqi people are both unlikely to succeed and will also worsen Jordanian ties with other Arab countries with whom we should be working to expand and deepen relations.

A unilateral Jordanian drive to save Iraq is morally compelling and noble, but politically naive and unconvincing. We are right to look for ways to help the Iraqi people out of their mess and to convince the Iraqi government to change its police state ways, but on our own we do not have the political power, financial resources or coalition of credible partners necessary to succeed. We would be better advised to focus our efforts on three parallel tracks:

(A) Prodding the Arab states and people into working more diligently to save Iraq, by coordinating pan-Arab relief efforts that can send humanitarian aid to the most vulnerable groups in Iraq. The biggest danger in Iraq today is the prospect of an entire generation of mentally and physically stunted children, and a growing number of their parents' whose desperation to survive turns them towards criminality. Pan-Arab institutions have little credibility, but if ever there was a good cause to try to prod them into action it is the cause of providing humanitarian relief for Iraqi children and women.

(B) Shaming the Security Council permanent members into separating their political embargo against the Iraqi government from their killer sanctions on the Iraqi people. The fact that Iraq has not accepted the existing U.N. offer to sell oil for food and medicine should prompt the U.N. and Iraq to seek other possible means of generating food and medicine for the neediest Iraqis. Jordan is well placed to lead a global lobbying effort that would explore creative and politically feasible new means of shaming those states that control the Security Council into living up to their words about wanting to hurt the Iraqi regime and not the Iraqi people.

(C) We can best help the Iraqi people in the long term by providing an example of a sensible, participatory governance system that is applicable in a constitutional and parliamentary monarchy such as ours as well as in a republic such as Iraq. Jordan does not have the power or resources to change the face of the Middle East through pressure politics, but it does have the capacity to serve by example. The best we have to offer is our endeavour to develop a governance system and political culture that are responsive, participatory, accountable and humane. Our greatest gift to Iraq is to keep working for the sake of a better, more dignified Arab future based on the concepts of realism, prudence, and the respect of the intelligence of our people.

The question of what to do about Iraq requires serious and widespread debate in the Arab World. We in Jordan have a major role to play in instigating such a debate, but we should not make the mistake of thinking that we can address the issue single-handedly with a tattered band of Iraqi desperados in tow. We should reject the ridiculous suggestions of the sycophants, power groups, influence brokers, and dreamers amongst us who would abuse our generous spirit to promote their own personal causes, at the expense of the wellbeing of the people of Jordan and Iraq. Saving Iraq is a national duty. Trying to do so by hosting a conference of the present Iraqi opposition is a mean and cruel illusion.

The theory of conspiracy

By G.H. Jansen

THE AMATEUR video film on the killing of Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin calls aloud, for answers to one question: Was there or was there not a conspiracy behind the murder which went beyond his confessed assassin Yigal Amir and his circle? That this is no Oliver Stone variation — in the conspiracy theory, in his film, "JFK," is affirmed by an article in the popular and influential Israeli daily, "Yediot Ahranot," published on Dec. 1. "Any one who thinks that the disclosure about the links between the heads of Eyal (the extremist gang to which Amir belonged) and the Shabak (Israel's internal security service) are all there is will be proved wrong."

What the video film shows at least is that there could

have been a conspiracy. The film begins with a long-shot lasting 10 minutes or so of the parking lot attached to the Kings of Israel Square (now Yitzhak Rabin Square) where Rabin was killed immediately after a peace rally held in the square. It shows a figure clad in loose black clothes standing around, loitering in fact, Yigal Amir himself. Not talking to anyone and not being spoken to by anyone.

This was an absolutely extraordinary circumstance, because that whole area was supposed to have been closed off to the public except those with special passes which Amir did not have. The parking area should have been completely empty of people other than the ministers' drivers and guards. But the film shows that it was full, with 50-60 persons milling around. And yet no one, not a civilian

or a policeman or a soldier, asked the young man what he was doing hanging around suspiciously on the fringes of what has become a very controversial event.

At one point Amir is seen taking his ease, leaning against a large flower basin, with his legs crossed, strangely insouciant, considering that he had on his person a deadly weapon, a pistol with dum-dum bullets, which even a most cursory search would have revealed.

Was all this because Amir knew that his killing was going to be "an inside job" and that he was not going to be questioned or searched? The next suspicion-raising circumstance is seen on the film when the bodyguard covering Rabin's back moved away sideways and to the front, leaving the premier's back exposed with Yigal Amir in the knot of people

surrounding Rabin, still unchallenged. He moved swiftly forward into this gap to shoot Rabin in the back at point-blank range.

Shabak's explanation for this removal of protection was that the guard was trying to look backwards to see whether Mrs. Rabin was following her husband. Well, maybe.

Then when Rabin was rushed, bleeding into his official car no one from his entourage was with him except his driver and one of his police guards. They took a wrong road to the hospital and had to double back; then had to argue with a policeman at a roadblock; and when they eventually got to the hospital no doctors were in the emergency section expecting this casualty; so that by the time Rabin received medical attention he had bled to death.

Human Rights File

By Dr. Waleed M. Sa'di

Avoiding compliance with global treaties

THE EASIEST way to get off scot free from international platforms or programmes of actions as the one adopted last month in Beijing on women is to enter reservations on certain controversial paragraphs that are found repugnant to one's religion or culture. This is exactly what the Jordanian and other delegations from the developing as well as the developed countries did at the World Conference on Women when faced with language that appeared contrary to their traditions and norms. What emerged at the end, therefore, was a document that seemed to have been adopted by the international community while in reality it was an ineffective document due to the many reservations that rendered it toothless at the end of the day.

The subject of reservations have preoccupied international jurists for a long time, especially when more and more countries resort to it when signing and ratifying international conventions and treaties in a bid to appear as a faithful adherent to such instruments.

Still there is hardly a consensus till now among international lawyers on the effect of reservations, which have been mushrooming of late to an extent that led some to contend that they are no longer benign. On one hand, there is the concern that depriving states from entering reservations would drive them away from becoming state parties to new and progressive international conventions. On the other, there is the equal concern that allowing them so many reservations would make a mockery of state commitments and obligations. So the best answer is to encourage governments to join human rights treaties by allowing a certain leeway to enter reservations, that do not relate to matters of great substance.

The dilemma that the Jordanian delegation to the Beijing conference encountered right from the beginning was how to appear as supporters of equality between the two sexes yet insist, inter alia, that their inheritance rights may not be the same as called for by the Sharia. The delegation naturally entered reservations on all paragraphs that seemed contrary to Islam and Jordanian laws on matters that touched not only on inheritance rights but also on such issues as citizenship rights of children, freedom to travel and movement, the right to enter into a marriage contract and seek divorce and the right of women to have their own separate national identity cards.

Whereas Islam ordains that the inheritance of females must be inferior to those of males, there is nothing in Islam that prevents children from obtaining the citizenship of their mothers as is the case when children receive automatically the citizenship of their fathers. Likewise, there is nothing in Sharia that denies women the right to apply for and acquire an independent registration or the right to travel and leave one's country on an equal footing with men.

In other words there are so many areas of existing discrimination between the sexes which can be eliminated without any prejudice to Islam. Any existing legislation contrary to the true spirit of our religion must therefore be immediately amended.

Democrats will run against Gingrich in every race

By Alan Elsner
Reuter

WASHINGTON — In 1996, virtually every Democratic political candidate in every race in every state across the United States will be running against the same Republican opponent — Newt Gingrich.

The Democrats believe that in Mr. Gingrich, the speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives, whose unpopularity ratings have reached 65 per cent in some recent polls, they have finally found an unbeatable weapon.

And they are wasting no time in deploying it.

In the race for the governorship of Kentucky earlier this month, Democrat Paul Patton seemed headed for defeat until he started running anti-Gingrich T.V. spots.

Mr. Patton cried to a narrow victory, prompting his media adviser, Tom Ochs, to say: "We assume Newt will be prominently featured next year in everybody's races."

The strategy is being tested in a special election in California in December, where Democrats are trying to hold the House seat being vacated by retiring congressman Norm Mineta.

The race began with Republican Tom Campbell over 20 points ahead of Democrat Jerry Estruth in the polls. Then Mr. Estruth started branding his opponent as "One more vote for Newt," and now the lead is down to 12 points with 36 per cent undecided.

Colorado representative Pat Schroeder, who announced on Wednesday that she was quitting Congress next year, said hitting Mr. Gingrich was the way for Democrats to win.

"People have finally awakened and understand that Newt Gingrich is really the Republican Party, that everybody is either a femi-Newt or a Newtoid, and if they vote Republican they are getting Newt," said Mr. Schroeder.

Massachusetts Senator Edward Kennedy put that lesson into action Wednesday when he issued a state-

ment reacting to the news that William Weld, the popular Republican governor of his home state, had decided to run for the senate next year.

"The last thing Massachusetts needs in Washington is another vote for Newt Gingrich," Sen. Kennedy said, ignoring the fact that Mr. Gingrich sits in the House, not the Senate.

Mr. Gingrich, the pugacious architect of the conservative legislative agenda known as the Contract with America and driving force in the effort to balance the budget, is beloved among highly ideological right-wing Republicans.

But a backlash appears to be building against Republican plans to balance the budget with cuts in popular medical insurance and other social programmes. They are identified with Mr. Gingrich, and Democrats portray them as heartless.

Further, many voters see him as petty and confrontational, and even his supporters acknowledge he has a penchant for verbal gaffes that can make him look vindictive or silly.

Mr. Gingrich made headlines twice in the past two weeks with casual comments that gave gleeful Democrats more ammunition.

First he complained about his treatment on President Bill Clinton's airplane on the flight to and from the funeral of assassinated Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin. He was particularly upset about having to disembark by the rear door.

Then, Mr. Gingrich commented on a triple murder in Chicago, blaming the carnage on the welfare state. The bereaved family told him to keep his politics out of their private grief.

Now he is also under fire for ethical violations. The bipartisan federal election commission Wednesday accused a political organisation headed of illegally channelling funds to his own reelection campaign.

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Bethlehem marks

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...in reference to Mr. Arafat. Pilgrims from abroad also were overcome by joy. Those interviewed were on their first pilgrimage and so unable to compare it with previous Christmases under Israeli occupation.

Carol McGirr, from Britain, said: "I'm bemused. My joy is unexplained. It is not as expected. There are more people. I can say it's outstanding."

Bethlehem is the sixth city in the West Bank to come under Palestinian rule after Jericho, Jenin, Tulkarm, Nablus and Kalkilya. Mr. Arafat's self-rule headquarters is in the Gaza Strip, handed over by Israel last year.

Arab villagers reject proposal for return

Meanwhile, Israeli ministers recommended on Sunday that the government allow some Arabs to return to parts of two villages they were forced from half a century ago but villagers rejected the proposal.

A ministerial committee appointed to check the matter insisted the recommendation did not create a precedent for a Palestinian right of return under future peace talks.

"A solution is coming which will provide a limited return, limited in area, limited in the number of people," Agriculture Minister Yacov Tsur, a member of the ministerial committee, told Israel Radio.

According to the committee's recommendation, around 60 hectares (150 acres) would be allotted to build each of the Arab villages Iqrit and Kufr Birim which, like hundreds of others were depopulated when Jewish forces drove Arab armies from the area in the 1948 Middle East war that saw Israel's establishment.

The original villages were situated on about 1,200 hectares (3,000 acres). The committee also recommended that plots of land be allocated solely to villagers who headed households in 1948 and two of their

Israel optimistic

(Continued from page 1)

Mr. Dayan said Syria's more positive attitude was prompted by pressure to move ahead of next year's Israeli elections and realisation of the weight of the Israeli opposition and divisions over peace with Damascus.

"Syria came to the conclusion that our time is limited, we have elections next year and if they want to make business they have to do it now... and that the opposition in Israel was not a game, the nation is divided, parliament is divided," he said.

Israel was also ready to make a complete withdrawal from a border security zone in Lebanon," Mr. Dayan said. He added that talks with Syria would touch Damascus' arrangements in Lebanon. Damascus is the main foreign power broker in Lebanon where it maintains 5,000 troops.

Tlass blasts U.S.

Meanwhile, Syrian Defence Minister Mustafa Tlass rejected Israeli demands for an early warning system in the Golan and criticised Israeli Biblical beliefs, saying Israelis "believe that God only created Jews and the rest of mankind are animals."

"Rabin's proposal for the monitoring stations meant that he wanted to keep a symbol of Israeli occupation of Syrian land and that concerned us that his intentions were malicious."

He also rejected widespread concerns that the advanced Israeli economy will outpace the Arabs once a peace settlement has been achieved.

"If Israel believes that it will dominate the area, it will probably forget that enemies in the Arab Nation outnumber its Jewish population."

Mr. Tlass in an interview

Islamists lead in elections

(Continued from page 1)

forced to call early elections after her right-left coalition collapsed in September.

The RP, relying on ideological coherence and grassroots organisation, was seeking to build on the big gains of 1994, when it captured Istanbul, Ankara and

offspring, triggering angry reactions from villagers.

"This is completely unacceptable. We will not be government's executioner, deciding who lives and who dies among our children, who returns and who doesn't," Kamal Yacoub, a spokesman for the villagers' group, told Israel Radio.

According to U.N. figures, which include natural increase, there are nearly three million Palestinian refugees from what is today Israel dispersed in the West Bank, Gaza Strip and surrounding Arab states.

"They (residents of Iqrit and Kufr Birim) can be returned without people telling us that this decision forces us to return other refugees to other villages in other areas," said Justice Minister David Libai, also a member of the committee.

Part of the problem is that Israeli Jewish agricultural communities now sit on part of the villages' lands.

Israel's Channel Two Television showed Jews and Arabs almost coming to blows at one of the demolished villages on Sunday over the land issue. Order was restored when police arrived.

Mr. Tsur said of the upcoming solution: "Certainly, it is not a return to the agricultural sector, rather only residential."

Unlike most refugees, the presidents of Iqrit and Kufr Birim remained in what became Israel, close enough to see their former homes — which Israel eventually demolished in 1951 save for the village churches — every day.

The villagers pressed Israeli governments for permission to return. There are 3,000 people who want to go back.

Israel, in a 1993 interim peace deal with the Palestine Liberation Organisation, agreed to talk about displaced persons from the 1967 Middle East war, a small percentage of the entire refugee population, but not those from 1948 whose fate is up for discussion only when final peace talks start in May.

Israel has not shown willingness for a mass return of the 1967 refugees even to the West Bank and Gaza, where Palestinian self-rule is being established.

with Al Aswaq daily, bitterly criticised the United States' Middle East policy, which he said was aimed at "scattering" the Arabs while "pampering" Israel, the Al Aswaq newspaper reported Sunday.

He also lauded the Nov. 4 assassination of Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin by a Jewish extremist and said the Jewish "littered off the Arabs and Muslims a scar of terrorism."

"Rabin was not candid when he talked about peace," Mr. Tlass said in the rare interview which was published Sunday.

"In the future, I imagine that the United States, which has pampered the Jewish state, will cry out loud from it," he commented.

Mr. Tlass, lieutenant general and longtime close associate of President Assad, said the United States "has sought to scatter the Arab Nation... and it's playing all the cards now so that every Arab country will remain scared of the other."

He accused Washington of attempting to "marginalise" Egypt's role in the region and "restrain" Saudi Arabia. He blamed the United States for "pushing Iraq to go into war with Iran" in 1980.

"And when Iraq became strong, the United States exaggerated that power," he said. "When circumstances were opportune for it (Iraq) to destroy itself, the U.S. drew a path for it until it rushed into invading Kuwait."

Israel wants to keep ground surveillance monitoring stations on the Golan, but Syria insists aerial surveillance is sufficient.

"Spy satellites can monitor the area and spy on it day and night," said Mr. Tlass, who accused Mr. Rabin of "using such an excuse to delay the negotiations."

other cities in local polls. It has traded heavily on its anti-Western message and clean image.

For her part, Ms. Ciller hoped to convert a customs union with Europe, sealed on Dec. 13, into votes for her vision of a 99 per cent Muslim but secularist Turkey anchored to the West.

LONDON (R) — A negotiated peace settlement in former Yugoslavia and progress towards Middle East peace despite the assassination of Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin were political highlights of 1995.

Here is a chronology of the main events of the year.

Jan. 17 — A powerful earthquake measuring 7.2 on the Richter scale strikes Kobe, central Japan, killing more than 5,000 people.

Feb. 22 — Britain and Ireland unveil their "Framework Document" for a political settlement in Northern Ireland.

Feb. 26-8 — British merchant bank Barings PLC collapses after trader Nick Leeson loses \$1 billion on Japanese shares and bonds in Singapore. Mr. Leeson is arrested in Germany on March 2, extradited to Singapore on Nov. 22 and jailed for six-and-a-half years on Dec. 2.

Feb. 28 — Raul Salinas, brother of former Mexican president Carlos Salinas de Gortari, is arrested in Mexico on charges of masterminding the murder of a top ruling party official.

March 20 — Eleven people die and more than 5,000 are injured in a nerve gas attack on the Tokyo subway by the Aum Shinri Kyo religious sect.

March 20 — Up to 35,000 Turkish troops launch a

three-pronged attack across the Iraqi border against Kurdish rebels.

March 26 — Border controls between Seven European Union (EU) countries disappear as the Schengen agreement comes into force.

April 10 — Israel and Jordan exchange ambassadors following a peace agreement in October 1994.

April 19 — A huge car bomb devastates a federal building in Oklahoma city, killing at least 167 people.

May 7 — Conservative Paris Mayor Jacques Chirac wins the French presidential election.

May 8 — Ceremonies held to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the end of World War II in Europe.

May 11 — A U.N. conference agrees to make permanent the 25-year-old nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT).

May 25 — The start of a major flare-up in the Bosnian war. NATO launches air strikes near Pale. The Serbs retaliate by shelling U.N. "safe areas", killing 68 in Tuzla.

May 28 — Earthquake strikes the far east oil-

producing town of Neftegorsk on Russia's Sakhalin island, killing about 2,000 people.

May 28 — Bosnian Foreign Minister Irfan Ljubicic is killed when his helicopter is shot down by Serbs.

May 31 — Bosnian Serbs take 372 U.N. peacekeepers hostage. Lord Owen resigns as European Union peace negotiator.

June 14 — Chechen fighters launch a commando-style raid on the Russian town of Budennovsk, taking hundreds of hostages. More than 120 people are killed.

June 26 — Gunmen attempt to assassinate Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak in the Ethiopian capital, Addis Ababa.

June 29 — Part of a department store in Seoul collapses, killing nearly 500.

June 29 — The U.S. space shuttle Atlantis successfully docks with the Russian space station MIR.

July 9 — French commandos storm the Greenpeace ship Rainbow Warrior after it enters an exclusion zone near the French nuclear test site at Mururoa atoll.

July 10 — Burmese opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi is freed unconditionally after nearly six years of house arrest.

July 11 — Bosnian Serb forces overrun the U.N. declared "safe area" of Srebrenica. Two days later most of enclave's Muslim population have been moved out.

Aug. 4 — Croatia launches an offensive to regain the Krajina enclave, held by its Serb minority for four years, and achieves success within four days.

Aug. 10 — Two sons-in-law of Iraqi President Saddam Hussein, Lt. Gen. Hussein Kamel Hassan and Saddam Kamel Hassan, defect to Jordan.

Aug. 28 — Two shells hit Sarajevo near the main market killing 37 and wounding 85 in the worst attack in more than a year.

Aug. 29 — Georgian leader Eduard Shevardnadze escapes an assassination attempt.

Sept. 5 — France conducts the first in a series of underground nuclear tests on Mururoa atoll.

Sept. 21 — Croat and Bosnian government forces end an 11-day offensive during which they reduce Serb-held territory in Bosnia to about 50 per cent.

Sept. 26 — Trial of former Italian Prime Minister Giulio Andreotti opens. On Nov. 5, an Italian judge orders Mr. Andreotti, accused of belonging to the mafia, to stand trial on murder charges.

Sept. 28 — Israel and the

Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) sign an agreement in Washington extending Palestinian rule to most of West Bank.

Oct. 3 — Former American football star O.J. Simpson is acquitted of murdering his ex-wife Nicole and her friend Ronald Goldman.

Oct. 12 — Ceasefire agreed on Oct. 5 comes into effect in Bosnia.

Oct. 20 — Belgian Willy Claes resigns from his post as NATO secretary general. Spanish Foreign Minister Javier Solana is confirmed as his replacement on Dec. 5.

Oct. 30 — In a referendum on independence, Quebec votes by a narrow margin to remain part of Canada.

Nov. 2 — South Africa's former Defence Minister Magnus Malan and 10 other people are charged with 13 apartheid-era murders.

Nov. 4 — Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin is assassinated as he leaves a Tel Aviv peace rally.

Nov. 10 — Nigeria's ruling military council bans nine activists including the Ogoni minority rights leader Ken Saro-Wiwa.

Nov. 16 — The U.N. war crimes tribunal on former Yugoslavia charges Bosnian Serb leader Radovan Karadzic and army chief Ratko Mladic with organis-

ing a massacre in Srebrenica. They had already been charged on July 25 with genocide throughout Bosnia.

Nov. 20 — Aleksander Kwasniewski is declared winner of Polish presidential election, defeating incumbent Lech Walesa.

Nov. 21 — The warring sides in Bosnia agree to a peace plan at U.S.-sponsored talks in Dayton, Ohio.

Nov. 25 — Result of Irish referendum shows 50.28 per cent in favour of lifting a ban on divorce, with 49.72 per cent against.

Dec. 5 — Sri Lankan troops complete the capture of Jaffna after five years of control by Tamil rebels.

Dec. 11 — Israeli troops leave the West Bank town of Nablus at the end of 28 years of occupation.

Dec. 13 — Chinese dissident Wei Jingsheng is imprisoned for 14 years for pro-democracy activities.

Dec. 14 — Leaders from former Yugoslavia sign a Bosnian peace treaty, formally ending Europe's worst conflict since World War II.

Dec. 17 — Communists make significant gains in Russian parliamentary elections.

Dec. 20 — A heavily armed NATO force takes over the United Nations' Bosnia peacekeeping role.

While ASEAN advances, APEC is slowing down

By Philip Bowring

HONG KONG — The Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) continues to surprise the sceptics with its dynamism.

Like all summits, the ASEAN one just ended in Bangkok had its fair share of empty rhetoric. But the group's continued progress on trade liberalisation, adoption of a treaty banning nuclear weapons from the region, and moves towards eventual entry of Burma, Laos and Cambodia represented substantive advance in members' attempts to broaden and deepen regional economic and political cohesion.

All this stands in contrast to the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) summit in Osaka last month which singularly failed to put any flesh on the 2020 free trade agenda declared at Bogor a year earlier by an all-star cast headed by the leaders of the United States, China, Japan and Indonesia.

The failure of APEC to be anything more than a talking shop and photo opportunity is a warning to ASEAN not to try to be all things to all people, and a reminder that political and economic objectives are not always compatible. Indeed, the desire both to enlarge the body and, with the anti-nuclear treaty, give it a strategic dimension is seen in some quarters as possibly diverting energies away from its trade agenda — an ASEAN Free Trade Area by 2003.

The Bangkok meeting had rather mixed results on the trade front. Liberalisation of services is being speeded up, but there is no real progress towards trade in farm products. ASEAN, most of whose members have trade-oriented economies, could fall behind some other regions, including Latin America, in trade opening.

Vietnam's recent joining of ASEAN was desirable from the perspective of regional solidarity — particularly in relations with China — but, even with the

adjustment allowances it will be given, Vietnam will be a drag on economic integration.

The next two candidates, Laos and Cambodia, are small enough, and already quite integrated with larger neighbours, not to be a problem when they join, probably in 1997. But Burma — for which there is as yet no timetable — will be even more difficult to digest than Vietnam.

Sceptics will say the Nuclear Weapons Free Zone declaration is of no more practical use than the declaration of a Zone of Peace, Freedom and Neutrality by the original ASEAN five in Kuala Lumpur in 1971. Then as now, most members had close if informal military ties to America.

However, by including members' 200-mile exclusive economic zones in their definition of the nuclear zone, they have sent a particular message to China, whose sea and island claims in the South China Sea extend well into ASEAN economic zones.

While ASEAN makes practical advances, APEC looks good on paper but is marginal to the real world of trade and investment in the regions it embraces.

Proponents point to the progress made by most APEC members in bringing down barriers to trade and investment. They point, for instance, to President Jiang Zemin's announcement in Osaka of a major trade liberalisation package. But APEC was not the cause of any liberalisation.

In China's case, Mr. Jiang chose Osaka because it afforded him maximum publicity. It was not to honour APEC but to improve China's chances of early entry into the World Trade Organisation. Other liberalisations are owed to the completed Uruguay Round, or to U.S. bilateral pressure, or to hopes of joining the OECD (South Korea) and the WTO (Taiwan). Others are owed to the ASEAN Free Trade Area, or the North American Free Trade Agreement, or just to enlightened

self-interest.

APEC's economic irrelevance is underlined by the fact that Malaysia, which is heavily dependent on trade, is the least enthusiastic about it.

Mahathir Mohammad may be venting his irritation at U.S. opposition to his all-Asian East Asia Economic Caucus proposal. But the Malaysian prime minister is not one to throw away economic opportunities for his country.

Others share Malaysia's scepticism but find it polite to keep quiet. Asian members mostly take no notice at all of Latin American membership.

APEC's other goals are equally vague, as perhaps indicated by U.S. Defence Secretary William Perry talking about the possibility of APEC becoming a security organisation. The truth is that the United States began by ignoring APEC, then saw a need to counter the EAEC and use APEC as a forum for free trade rhetoric. Meanwhile, it pursues substantive issues

either bilaterally or through the WTO.

The dreamworld quality of APEC aims was demonstrated by the discussion of agriculture in Osaka. The meeting eventually came up with a meaningless formula that all could swallow. But if even small groups like the ASEAN Free Trade Area, most of whose members are farm exporters, cannot agree on free trade, what hope is there in the vastly more diverse APEC?

Does anyone seriously imagine that China, which has been obsessed with food security for millennia, will put its grain prices entirely at the mercy of international markets?

The lesson of the Osaka and Bangkok summits is that realistic trade agendas for all members of APEC will be either in the global forum of the WTO or in smaller arenas like AFTA, and NAFTA. That is as it should be.

International Herald Tribune

Unmasking the real face of 'terrorism'

By Mushahid Hassan

THE ASSASSINATION of Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin has evoked shock and concern not just because he was a principal architect of Israel's post-cold-war strategy towards the Arab World, but because he was attempting to co-opt the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) into the joint containment of the "Islamic threat" posed by Hamas in the occupied territories and Hizbollah in Lebanon.

The more obvious reason for near disbelief expressed in Western capitals and the Western media in the aftermath of the killing is the identity of its perpetrator. A right-wing Israeli assassinating his own prime minister was not supposed to happen, given that current Western mythology holds that terrorism is synonymous with the Arabs or Muslims. A recent issue of Newsweek magazine said in so many words that in the Middle East, at least in the American mind, the face of terror is usually wrapped in a kufiya, adding that terrorism was also the kind of thing that Arabs did to each other.

Interestingly, the shock and dismay expressed on the discovery that Rabin's assassin was a Jew is similar to sentiments expressed when those who bombed the Oklahoma building earlier this year turned out not to be Muslims but right-wing Christian extremists, thereby disproving the con-

ventional wisdom of most Westerners that terrorism is somehow the exclusive preserve of Muslims.

Ironically, the assassination of Rabin, who was Israel's chief of staff during the 1976 war and defence minister during the earlier stages of the intifada, when he was the architect of the Israeli occupation army's strategy of "breaking the bones of Palestinian children resisting the occupation," followed by a little over a week the killing in Malta of Fathi Shaqaqi, the leader of Islamic Jihad. Thankfully, as was the case in Oklahoma, the assassination of Rabin was not the work of any Muslim, since that would have simply reaffirmed the perception in the West that terrorism and Islam are synonymous.

On the contrary, as was the case in Oklahoma, the assassination of Rabin has undermined, and indeed exposed, the nature of the real terrorist threat. Both outrages have belied the underlying racism in the perceptions, policies and arguments of those who have sought to identify Islam and the Muslims with "fundamentalism and terrorism."

Racism in Western arguments

The same racism permeates other Western arguments on such issues as nuclear weapons, when the retention of nuclear weapons by the West is justified by reasons of



Yigal Amir

security deterrence, but the quest for the acquisition of such capabilities on the part of Muslims is presented as a threat which is undiminished by the unstated, but widely held, view in the West that similar weapons of destruction in the hands of Muslims would be "irresponsible," and, therefore, pose an "unacceptable" threat to peace.

The second aspect which has been exposed by the assassination of Rabin is the fact that Israel's own creation has a basis in armed violence and terrorism. This is a commonly known fact, which is not widely discussed these days, since, in Western parlance, such talk would not be "politically

correct," nor would it help to focus attention on the "Islamic threat."

Like a number of Israeli prime ministers before him, including Menachem Begin, who belonged to the terrorist group Irgun, or Yitzhak Shamir, who was a member of the infamous Stern Gang, which was among those responsible for blowing up the King David hotel in Jerusalem, Rabin, too, got his military training during the run-up to the creation of Israel in the Hagannah. That streak of violence has been an integral component of Israel's social fabric, most evident in its policies towards Palestinians like the assassination of PLO leader Abu Jihad in April 1988 by

Israeli gunman or the illegal and forcible construction of settlements on territory occupied by Israel.

For instance, the worst act of terrorism during the Arab-Israeli conflict was the killing by an Israeli, Baruch Goldstein, of 29 Muslim worshippers during Friday prayers at the mosque in Hebron. And in the case of Rabin, the killer was not some demented deviant outside the Israeli mainstream, but a man who would normally be considered very much a part of it.

Rooted in religion

The third aspect revolves around the entire question of terrorism rooted in religion. At a recent seminar on the issue held in Paris on Oct. 30, which was attended by Jewish and Muslim religious leaders as well as academics, it was stated that "religious fanaticism prompts more than 20 per cent of international terrorist incidents and is largely responsible for the increasingly violent and ruthless nature of terrorism."

The seminar referred to the escalation of terrorism "especially where religion is allied with nationalism — as in Bosnia, the Middle East or the Indian sub-continent."

Interestingly, in all the three areas cited by the seminar, the Muslims have been victims of an aggressive fundamentalism that often uses force and terror as a weapon, as demon-

strated by Jewish terrorism in Israel, the demolition of the Babri Mosque and the killings of Muslims in Bombay during December 1992 and January 1993, as well as Serbian Christian ethnic cleansing of Bosnian Muslims which has included the use of rape as a weapon. U.N. safe areas like Srebrenica and Zepa were deliberately allowed to fall since they were perceived to be "defensible," resulting in the execution of 8,000 Muslim men in the former alone.

Like Oklahoma earlier this year, or the Tokyo underground poison gas killings, where 11 died and over 5,000 were injured, the recent assassination of Rabin should serve as an eye-opener for the West. The roots of terrorism in contemporary society are not confined to Muslims. It is time for the West to shed its self-righteous image that "our people cannot do such vile things; it has got to be Muslims or Arabs."

The reality is that as the track record in the United States, the Middle East, Bosnia or South Asia underlines, Muslims have frequently been the victims of terrorism perpetrated by non-Muslims. Rabin's assassination has again brought home this ugly reality, and Western governments need to ponder how best to combat this threat, rather than giving it a religious colouring as has been done so often in the recent past.

Middle East International

Higher gas output from Rishah can raise coverage of electric power needs to 20 per cent

By a Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — The pending production of an additional 10 million cubic feet daily of natural gas from the Rishah gas field could cover up to 20 per cent of Jordan's electric power needs and save the government up to \$21 million annually, Director of the Petroleum Exploration Department at the Natural Resources Authority (NRA) Khaled Sheyyab said Monday.

Currently, daily production of natural gas from the Rishah field — approximately 28 million cubic feet daily — supplies between 12 and 15 per cent of Jordan's electric power needs, but earlier this week, chairman of the National Oil Company said that further exploitation of the Rishah field could boost production by approximately 10 million cubic feet daily, bringing production to 40 million cubic feet.

Gas from the field is channelled to four turbines, with a capacity of 30 megawatts each, that supply the national electricity network and currently generate between 95-98 megawatts of electricity. "We can add another turbine if we boost production to 45 million cubic feet per day," said Mr. Sheyyab, "which is entirely possible after we connect the other

wells in early 1996." According to Mr. Sheyyab, one well in south Rishah and another in Rishah's current production area are ready to connect to the turbines, and a third well, again in the southern area "looks promising."

The National Oil Company will continue to prospect for natural gas in the Kingdom in cooperation with foreign oil and gas companies, he said, but the remainder of Jordan's electricity needs will continue to be supplied by fuel oil.

"We now consume fuel oil at 1.5 million cubic metres," said Mr. Sheyyab, "1.1 million cubic metres of which is used for electric power generation."

Nearly half of the total volume consumed — 770,000 cubic metres — is imported from Iraq. "If we exploit and use 45 million additional cubic feet (of gas), then we would save \$21 million," he said, adding that, "the amount of gas consumed for electric power generation in 1994 is equivalent to 217,000 cubic metres of fuel oil, which costs \$21 million by international standards."

It is estimated that by raising the extracted volume of gas to 300 million cubic feet, Jordan could be self-sufficient in generating electricity. Mr. Sheyyab said that it was too early to tell whether or not self-sufficiency was a realistic out-

look since demand for natural gas is increasing sharply. He said the NRA expects demand for the resource to reach 270 million cubic feet per day by the year 2000 and by the year 2005, it estimates that demand will reach 415 million cubic feet.

"We do hope, though, that by increasing exploration activities and by applying new technologies in cooperation with the foreign companies we can recover more reserves that are sufficient to meet our need," he said.

To date, three foreign oil companies have signed various agreements with the NRA to prospect for oil and gas in the Kingdom: In September, the American company Trans Global signed an agreement of understanding to prospect for oil in the Dead Sea and Jordan Valley areas; second American oil company, Andarko, signed a letter of intent to start prospecting near Rishah; and this week, the NRA signed a memorandum of understanding with the Malaysian company Petronas for prospecting in the Sarhan district in the north-eastern part of the Kingdom. NRA Director Fakbri Daghestani said that the company will shortly sign a profit-sharing agreement before prospecting operations commence.

Israeli government approves sweeping bank reforms

TEL AVIV (R) — The Israeli government Sunday approved sweeping reforms requiring the country's powerful banks to sell off a substantial part of their assets, a treasury spokesman said.

The reforms have far-reaching implications for the concentration of economic power in Israel as well as for privatisation of the banking sector.

A key measure requires banks to reduce holdings in any non-financial company to a maximum 20 per cent by 1999, one year later than a government-appointed committee had originally recommended.

The banks must also reduce their non-financial holdings as a percentage of total capital to 15 per cent by 2002.

again a one-year extension over the original recommendation.

They will be allowed to hold an additional five per cent in foreign-based and owned non-financial assets, as proposed by Finance Minister Avraham Shohat.

In theory, the reforms apply to all banks but in practice the state-owned Bank Hapoalim and Bank Leumi are the only ones that hold significant non-financial assets.

The extension of the timetable was aimed at appeasing investors bidding for a controlling stake in Bank Hapoalim, Israel's largest bank.

Bank Hapoalim will be forced under the reforms to divest itself of either a 25 per cent stake in Koor Industries

or a 34 per cent holding in Clal, two of Israel's leading conglomerates.

The two groups bidding for Hapoalim had called on the government to soften the measures, indicating they would otherwise reconsider their bids.

One group is comprised of Claridge, the Israeli investment arm of Canada's Charles Bronfman, investor George Soros, Ted Arison of Carnival Cruise Lines and Goldman Sachs.

The other is led by Israeli businessman Eliezer Fishman and includes Bear Stearns.

The reforms will prevent banks from having veto power over business decisions in their non-financial holdings.

Council satisfied with supplies of foodstuffs, stability of prices

AMMAN (Petra) — The Higher Supply Council Sunday voiced satisfaction with the measures and steps taken by the Ministry of Supply to provide basic food items, and to ensure prices of others supply items.

Meeting under the chairmanship of Supply Minister Adel Al Qudah, the council decided to set up a mini committee to prepare a working paper on the future supply policy to be presented to the council during its next session, which will be held before the onset of the fasting month of Ramadan on or around Jan. 21.

Mr. Qudah briefed the council on the ministry's

efforts to provide enough supplies of the basic subsidised food items, including bread, rice, sugar and powder milk (Halihna). The minister said his ministry has coordinated with the general federation of Jordanian Chambers of Commerce and the General Union of Foodstuff Importers to import sufficient quantities of food items and sell them to the public, according to the Ministry of Supply prices during the fasting month of Ramadan.

In a related development, a special committee entrusted with fixing and monitoring prices of table eggs met under the chairmanship of Mr.

Qudah and reviewed the current prices of table eggs. The committee maintained the current prices of eggs, and called on retailers to adhere to these prices.

Commenting on the current egg prices, Samih Momani, director general of the Egg Producers and Marketers Society said the Jordanian market consumes a total of 50 to 60 million eggs a month. Mr. Momani expected a drop in the prices of eggs in Ramadan, attributing such a drop to the low demand for eggs in that month.

Mr. Momani maintained that prices of eggs in Jordan are low, if compared with the

prices in the neighbouring countries. He noted that poultry farmers sustained big losses since 1990, because exports had ceased since then. Mr. Momani said Jordan used to export 100 million eggs a month to Iraq and Arab Gulf countries.

He said the current egg price includes a profit margin for farmers, noting that it will in no way compensate farmers for their past losses. Member of the society, Sulaiman Irteimeh, noted a drop in the egg-farms due to successive losses, saying that the number of farms has dropped from 256 to 150 due to a rise in fodder prices, and lack of export markets.

Japan to boost aid to developing countries by 3.5%

TOKYO (AFP) — The Japanese government Sunday settled an argument over state budget plans with a record-low increase of 3.5 per cent in its aid to developing countries.

After last-minute negotiations, the finance and foreign ministries agreed to set Japan's official development assistance (ODA) for the next fiscal year at about 1.15 trillion yen (\$11.3 billion), government officials said.

The annual increase rate for Japan's ODA was improved from an original planned 2.8 per cent to 3.5 per cent, but still comes in a record low for the third consecutive year. It stood at 4.0 per cent in the preceding fiscal year.

"I believe we have given adequate consideration to international contributions despite the tough (financial) situation," Foreign Minister Yohei Kono told a news conference after meeting Finance Minister Masayoshi Takemura.

Mr. Kono said the revised allocation would help the

government fulfill its five-year ODA target of \$70-75 billion for fiscal 1993-1997.

On Monday, the cabinet of Prime Minister Tomiichi Murayama was scheduled to adopt bills on a big-spending budget of 75.1 trillion yen (\$736 billion) for the year beginning on April 1.

The bills will then be submitted to parliament for weeks of debate expected to be heated up by the government's decision on Tuesday to use public funds to limit the fallout from massive losses of housing loan companies.

The budget plans included a record 21 trillion yen in government bond issues to offset a decline in revenue, stimulate the economy and clean up the massive bad debt of the seven failed housing loan firms.

The finance minister told another news conference that the draft budget, due out Monday, represents only a transitional stage for solving the daunting task of rehabilitating state finances.

Jordan seeks to renew vital oil contract with Iraq

AMMAN (AP) — A team of Energy Ministry officials left for Iraq Sunday to renew an annual contract under which Baghdad supplies the Kingdom with all its oil needs of some 80,000 barrels a day.

Officials said the team is headed by the ministry's secretary general, Ahmad Basbir, and includes representatives of the Jordan Petroleum Refinery and the finance ministry.

Jordan plans to buy 3.3 million tonnes of crude oil, 120,000 tonnes of liquefied gas, 300,000 tonnes of diesel oil and 800,000 tonnes of fuel oil from Iraq next year, Energy Minister Sameeb Darwazah has said.

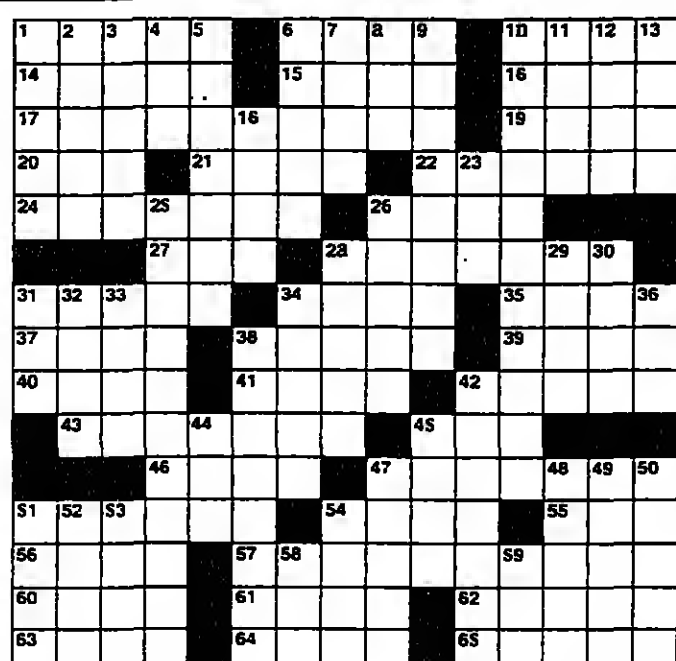
The minister, who visited Baghdad in September to negotiate Jordan's oil needs, said the figures were five per cent more than this year because of envisaged increase in demand in the kingdom.

Jordan received 55,000 barrels of crude oil and 25,000 of fuel oil from Baghdad every day with the tacit approval from the U.N. Security Council, which imposed crippling trade sanctions on Iraq after it invaded Kuwait in August 1990.

Jordan says the supplies are in settlement of an estimated \$1.1 billion debt incurred by the Iraqi government during and after its 1980-88 war with Iran.

THE Daily Crossword by Jay Sullivan

- ACROSS
- Sustain
 - Wail
 - Biblical miracle site
 - Gallows necessity
 - Western sch.
 - Automatic weapons
 - Occasionally
 - Clock sound
 - Chemical suffix
 - Ruby and Sandra
 - Scoundrels
 - Lucille Ball, for one
 - Mongador's security
 - Canine comment
 - Two-footed
 - Castor and Pollux
 - Mikado's Lord High Executioner
 - Pair
 - Large cat
 - Part of a TV broadcast
 - Take a breather
 - Seaweed
 - Divisible by two
 - Jousting fields
 - Nicaraguan opposition
 - Dailey —
 - Telegrapher's symbols
 - Violins
 - Chewy candy
 - Machele
 - Feedbag morsel
 - Big bird
 - Generally
 - Anecdote collections
 - Little squirt
 - Andes country
 - Haven
 - Singing brothers
 - Art item



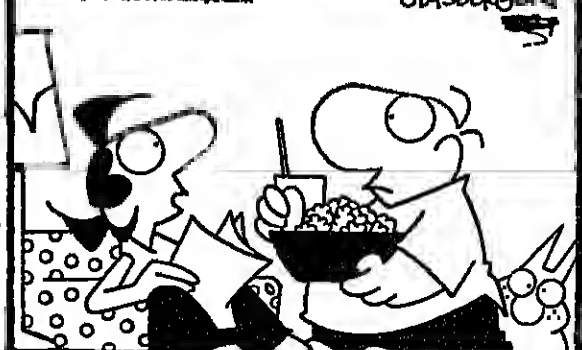
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Yesterday's puzzle solved:

RIASP SLATS MAISK
OMAR CACIC ANTI
DAINE ENTIRE ROLE
ENGLANO USTINIOV
APTS STUIN
PLATIE EAT BIESET
LIERONS MASTIE
IMA ADHIOK ALA
INIMBUS EFFICIENT
SITIC ARF WHERE
SLAY SHEA
DICTATE TAIRIFFS
ODOR ONEA HARE
RENO LUUNAE EDEN
MAYS LEVER DEED

- DOWN
- Circle or ear predecessor
 - Eremite's companion?
 - Browbeaten
 - Country letters
 - Deists
 - Silent
 - Name in publishing
 - Brew
 - Mikado's son
 - Settled
 - Black Sea neighbor
 - Pleasant
 - Invites
 - Headless
 - Originally
 - Firm
 - Compare Foretells
 - Some votes
 - Persist
 - Resort
 - Powder, briefly
 - Jason's ship
 - Pueblo ceremonial chambers
 - Shakes, for short
 - Back bone
 - "Vila"
 - Digit
 - Temperate
 - Type sets
 - Lemur
 - Bird of prey
 - Hard alloy
 - Catch
 - Cry of disbelief
 - Trepidation
 - Curse
 - Expression of good taste?
 - Eureka!

THE BETTER HALF By Glasbergen



Peanuts



Andy Capp



Mutt'n'Jeff



HOROSCOPE

FORECAST FOR MONDAY, DECEMBER 25, 1995

ARIES: (March 21 to April 19) Try not to irk a family tie in the morning today, and tonight it would be well to build up the trust of good friends and fellow associates.

TAURUS: (April 20 to May 20) You have to be tactful in communicating with others in the morning today, and later this evening be careful of committing yourself in practical matters.

GEMINI: (May 21 to June 21) Don't do anything which could jeopardise your security in the morning today, and later tonight try not to irk a friend. Don't repair any property.

MOON CHILDREN: (June 22 to July 21) Your judgement may not be very good in the morning today, if you try to push a private affair. Try to save more money for the lean times.

LEO: (July 22 to August 21) A private concern could cause you to act unreasonably. Use more care in getting your appearance enhanced by shopping in the right locations.

VIRGO: (August 22 to September 22) A friend could be disappointing in the morning today or vice versa, so keep poised and then you can express yourself nicely.

LIBRA: (September 23 to October 22) You may be worried about a credit affair, but keep mum and later you may find it difficult to gain some special aim also.

SCORPIO: (October 23 to November 21) Don't go running around aimlessly in the morning today, and later this evening you can get some problematical affair nicely solved.

SAGITTARIUS: (November 22 to December 21) Don't delay the payment of some just and pressing obligation which must be attended to today or you will regret it later this evening.

CAPRICORN: (December 22 to January 20) Don't disagree with one who does not like your ideas and who keeps quiet if you do not agree with the ideas of your mate.

AQUARIUS: (January 21 to February 19) Keep rooted to your career activities and don't let delays of others disturb you, and then a partner can be very supportive of you.

PISCES: (February 20 to March 20) You may get irritated at the depressing mood of your mate, but be silent and it will soon change. A fellow associate could be annoying.

Birthstone of December: Turquoise — Zircon

HOROSCOPE

FORECAST FOR TUESDAY, DECEMBER 26, 1995

ARIES: (March 21 to April 19) You can easily get an associate at this time to gently cooperate with you in expressing some fine tactical you may possess.

TAURUS: (April 20 to May 20) At this time you find the right way to have more accord at home with your family, so get busy at it and you will have much appreciation.

GEMINI: (May 21 to June 21) State your aims clearly today to allies and experts and gain their full cooperation in order to attain them best for your success.

MOON CHILDREN: (June 22 to July 21) Be more property today if you are going to gain the aims which are uppermost in your mind.

LEO: (July 22 to August 21) Get those ideas in operation which can help you to gain your finest aims and become more affluent in your present duties.

VIRGO: (August 22 to September 22) Don't fuss over tiresome details at this time. Use idealisms which can further your interests considerably. Show more affection.

LIBRA: (September 23 to October 22) You now comprehend the ideas of good friends who have been trying to get you to follow a new course of action for success.

SCORPIO: (October 23 to November 21) Get your talents to the attention of bigwigs today so that you can become more successful. Get some civic activities completed.

SAGITTARIUS: (November 22 to December 21) You can make those changes you have in mind since new interests can prove more interesting and profitable for you at this time.

CAPRICORN: (December 22 to January 20) Your hunches are good at this time and can help you to advance more quickly in your career, so follow them and you will be successful.

AQUARIUS: (January 21 to February 19) Be with successful persons in right walks of life at this time and try to emulate them for your own advancement and prosperity.

PISCES: (February 20 to March 20) Get your surroundings toned up today so that you can be more comfortable in them. Avoid one who is a trouble maker.

Birthstone of December: Turquoise — Zircon

Jordanians rally behind campaign to boycott coffee

By Ghaila Alal
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — Jordanians seemed to have positively responded to the campaign raised by the National Society for Consumer Protection (NSCP) to boycott coffee, according to Ahmad Husban, deputy president of the NSCP.

"The campaign is very suc-

cessful, and it will continue till all merchants respond to our appeal," said Mr. Husban.

Mr. Husban added that NSCP has received letters and calls of support from individuals, companies, hospitals, political parties and main institutions announcing that they have started boycotting coffee in response to the campaign.

"We received letters from the University of Jordan announcing that they stopped offering coffee in their cafeteria," Mr. Husban added.

Mr. Husban said that some merchants also responded to the NSCP's appeal and called for dialogue with the society. "This is a very positive turning point which proves that those merchants were

affected by the boycott," said Mr. Husban.

He added that the NSCP will open an honour list for the merchants who are willing to reduce their prices, adding that their names will be published in the newspapers to attract consumers to them.

The NSCP will later hold a reception to honour those merchants, according to a statement by the society.

According to a source, the Prime Ministry has also participated in the campaign and is only offering tea and herbs instead of coffee in its offices.

The coffee-boycott campaign has started in light of what the NSCP described as "the minimum reduction" on coffee prices agreed to between the Ministry of Supply and coffee importers last week.

The decision to lower coffee prices was taken by the Ministry of Supply and coffee importers in light of the significant international reduction of coffee prices eight months ago.

The coffee price reduction only included "robusta" beans which have been described by a coffee retailer as "low grade coffee."

The president of NSCP, Mohammad Obaidat had told the Jordan Times that over the last eight months, coffee

merchants have made 60-70 per cent profit at the expense of Jordanian consumers.

The NSCP had called for the quality of "Extra" beans be lowered to JD 3 per kilogramme, and "robusta" be lowered to JD 2.25.

While Abdul Karim Skafi a coffee merchant told the Jordan Times that even though coffee prices went down on the international market, merchants still have to pay 35 per cent in customs. Thus, they cannot reduce their prices to the level required by the NSCP, he said.

He added that all merchants have reduced prices of robusta beans to JD 3.5 per kilogramme, the price required by the Ministry of Supply. "After customs, we make a profit of 40 piasters per kilogramme, and if prices go down any further we will incur a loss," he said.

As for the "Extra" beans, which were not included in the price reduction, Mr. Skafi said that some merchants in western Amman are taking advantage of the consumer by raising the prices of this kind to JD 6-7 per kilogramme.

This situation, according to Mr. Skafi, has prompted the controversy.

Other coffee retailers such as Farouki, Abila Abella and

Shahin, have reported an increase in sales saying that the campaign did not affect them at all.

Nevertheless, the Jordanian Women's Union (JWU) launched a campaign calling on all women to boycott coffee as a support to NSCP. The union have distributed an appeal which Ojini Haddad, president of the women's committee for consumer protection at the JWU, said have received a positive response.

"Some people have already started boycotting coffee before getting the appeal and others did not know about it but responded positively to the campaign which will continue until coffee prices go down," said Ms. Haddad.

Citing the success of the campaign, Ms. Haddad said that offices at major commercial buildings have stopped offering coffee. She said that although the government has also responded to the campaign, the response is not enough.

"The government has the authority to take measures regarding this matter," she added.

This is the first time a campaign for a boycott is launched in the history of the Kingdom.

| AMMAN FINANCIAL MARKET | | | | |
|---|----------------------|-----------------|-----------------------------|------------------------|
| HOUSING BANK CENTER AMMAN - SHMEISANI | | | | |
| TELEPHONE: 607171 / 607174 | | | | |
| ORGANIZED MARKET SHARE PRICE LIST FOR SUNDAY 24/12/1995 | | | | |
| COMPANY'S NAME | NO. OF SHARES TRADED | VALUE TRADED JD | PROV. CLOSING PRICE | CHANGING PRICE |
| ARAB BANK PLO | 520 | 121570 | 234.000 | 233.500 |
| JORDAN NATIONAL BANK | 44154 | 203284 | 4.600 | 4.550 |
| BANK OF JORDAN | 600 | 2032 | 3.400 | 3.350 |
| MIDDLE EAST INVESTMENT BANK | 8400 | 10092 | 1.200 | 1.210 |
| LAURENCE DEVELOPMENT BANK | 7800 | 19656 | 2.520 | 2.520 |
| THE JORDANIAN BANK | 7200 | 36112 | 5.000 | 4.950 |
| JORDAN KUNAIT BANK | 6100 | 17447 | 2.850 | 2.900 |
| JORDAN GULF BANK | 24650 | 27592 | 1.120 | 1.120 |
| JORDAN ISLAMIC BANK | 1065 | 3791 | 3.560 | 3.590 |
| BUSINESS BANK | 200 | 452 | 3.200 | 3.200 |
| REIT ESTATE SAVINGS INVESTMENT FOR HOUSING | 350 | 800 | 3.220 | 3.200 |
| AMMAN BANK FOR INVESTMENT | 200 | 452 | 3.200 | 3.200 |
| ARAB BANKING CORPORATION/JORDAN | 262 | 1360 | 5.250 | 5.200 |
| PHILADELPHIA INVESTMENT BANK | 2450 | 3741 | 1.530 | 1.540 |
| RANKS SECTOR | 161933 | 503141 | INDEX NUMBER: 197.08 | CHANGE: + 0.167 |
| ARAB LIFE & ACCIDENT INSURANCE | 10000 | 23500 | 2.350 | 2.350 |
| INSURANCE SECTOR | 10000 | 23500 | INDEX NUMBER: 131.88 | CHANGE: + 0.301 |
| JORDANIAN ELECTRIC POWER | 26381 | 45874 | 1.720 | 1.730 |
| ARAB INTERNATIONAL HOTELS | 2700 | 18930 | 5.900 | 5.900 |
| JORDAN NATIONAL SHIPPING LINES | 1700 | 4386 | 2.600 | 2.680 |
| NATIONAL PORTFOLIO SECURITIES | 3500 | 6388 | 1.800 | 1.820 |
| REAL ESTATE INVESTMENT | 19550 | 19550 | 1.000 | 1.000 |
| UNITED MIDDLE EAST & CO. HOTELES | 750 | 1650 | 2.200 | 2.200 |
| ARAB INTER. FOR INVESTMENT & EDUCATION | 400 | 1300 | 3.250 | 3.250 |
| FAKRA PRIVATE UNIVERSITY | 4900 | 5659 | 1.170 | 1.170 |
| UNIFIED CO. FOR CONCRETE LAND TRANS. | 13450 | 28052 | 2.050 | 2.050 |
| UNION LANE DEVELOPMENT CORP. | 36600 | 38533 | 1.030 | 1.070 |
| SERVICES SECTOR | 105846 | 169113 | INDEX NUMBER: 127.99 | CHANGE: + 0.393 |
| THE JORDAN CEMENT FACTORIES | 23700 | 87358 | 3.640 | 3.650 |
| JORDAN PHOSPHATE MINES | 1538 | 4843 | 3.170 | 3.150 |
| THE ARAB POTASH | 100 | 530 | 5.300 | 5.300 |
| JORDAN PETROLEUM REFINERY | 1200 | 12147 | 10.010 | 10.080 |
| THE INDUSTRIAL COMMERCIAL & AGRICULTURAL | 491 | 1669 | 3.400 | 3.400 |
| ANAR PHARMACEUTICAL MANUFACTURING | 2900 | 13212 | 4.500 | 4.580 |
| JORDAN CERAMIC INDUSTRIES | 500 | 2000 | 4.000 | 4.000 |
| ARAB CERAMIC INDUSTRIES INDUSTRIES | 500 | 5625 | 11.400 | 12.250 |
| SPINNING & WEAVING | 2450 | 3920 | 1.600 | 1.600 |
| RAPHA INDUSTRIES | 200 | 442 | 2.200 | 2.210 |
| BAR AL DAMA DEVELOPMENT & INVESTMENT | 1910 | 14785 | 7.700 | 7.750 |
| ARAB ALUMINUM INDUSTRY | 1160 | 11262 | 9.700 | 9.750 |
| LIVESTOCK & POULTRY | 37450 | 22902 | 600 | 610 |
| ARAB PAPER CONVERTING & TANNING | 4650 | 6639 | 1.430 | 1.420 |
| NATIONAL STEEL INDUSTRY | 350 | 630 | 1.750 | 1.790 |
| NATIONAL INDUSTRIES | 23800 | 24702 | 1.010 | 1.020 |
| INTERMEDIATE PETRO-CHEMICAL INDUSTRIES | 3650 | 4462 | 1.240 | 1.270 |
| JORDAN CHEMICAL INDUSTRIES | 200 | 970 | 4.750 | 4.850 |
| UNIVERSAL CHEMICAL INDUSTRIES | 2550 | 6723 | 2.600 | 2.600 |
| ALAZAY INDUSTRIES | 12200 | 5817 | 4.750 | 4.750 |
| NATIONAL CABLE & WIRE MANUFACTURING | 6600 | 24420 | 3.700 | 3.700 |
| JORDAN SULFO-CHEMICALS | 550 | 705 | 1.250 | 1.250 |
| ARAB CENTER FOR PHARM. & CHEMICALS | 2700 | 4644 | 1.730 | 1.730 |
| UNIVERSAL MODERN INDUSTRIES | 4300 | 10678 | 2.480 | 2.480 |
| JORDAN INDUSTRIAL RESOURCES CO. | 14917 | 27804 | 1.860 | 1.860 |
| JORDANIAN SHAW CABLE COMPANY | 4350 | 7906 | 1.820 | 1.820 |
| EL-KAY KIDNEY WARE MANUFACTURING CO. | 12869 | 28173 | 2.180 | 2.220 |
| INTERNATIONAL TOBACCO & CIGARETTES | 19712 | 27765 | 1.410 | 1.410 |
| UNION CHEMICAL & VEGETABLE OIL INDUSTRY | 2450 | 4276 | 1.720 | 1.720 |
| INDUSTRIAL SECTOR | 180307 | 377027 | INDEX NUMBER: 125.31 | CHANGE: + 0.251 |
| GRAND TOTAL | 462085 | 3072781 | INDEX NUMBER: 156.61 | CHANGE: + 0.052 |
| NO. OF TRADED SHARES IN PARALLEL MARKET : 117285 | | | | |
| VALUE TRADED IN PARALLEL MARKET : 96206 | | | | |

Big shot of radiation makes cheap whisky smooth

OSAKA, Japan (R) — Using doses of radiation strong enough to kill 250 people, Japanese scientists say they can make bad wine taste good and cheap whisky smooth.

And they predict this kind of food irradiation could be legalised worldwide in as little as five years.

"It's funny," said Hiroshi Watanabe, joint head of research at the Japan Atomic Power Company's (JAPC) research facilities in Takasaki, just north of Tokyo.

"If you irradiate good wine or whisky, they taste better. But if you expose bad wine and cheap whisky to gamma rays, they taste much better," said Mr. Watanabe, 53.

Irradiation, he said, worked on cheap liquor because it was poorly made, in the case of wine or imperfectly blended, in the case of whisky.

"With whisky, what the radioactivity does is promote the blending process and that takes away any aftertaste,"

he told Reuters.

"With wine, you end up discoloring it a bit, but by promoting fermentation you take away the bitter aftertaste of cheap wines and make it much smoother," he said.

Researchers expose whisky and wine to 2,000 joules of radioactive gamma rays, said Mr. Watanabe, adding that it takes just eight joules of gamma rays to kill a person.

The main drawback with irradiation, he said, was that it remains illegal in most countries, and that many consumer groups oppose it, insisting it increases the risk of cancer.

"Right now, even in France and Holland, where food irradiation is common, many companies shy away from irradiating products because they fear consumers will link them to nuclear power and radiation, and turn to other brands," he said.

Still, Hitoshi Itoh, 55, co-head of research at the Japan Atomic Power Company's re-

search facilities in Takasaki, predicted food irradiation could be legalised worldwide in as little as five years.

"Food irradiation is likely to take off globally in 2,000," he said.

"By then governments across the world hope to ban the use of methyl bromide — the chemical now used to prolong the life of and kill harmful bacteria in food products — because of the damage it does to the ozone layer, and after that's banned, the only viable option is irradiation," he said.

Mr. Itoh spoke after attending a food irradiation conference in Vienna, Austria, sponsored by the U.N.'s World Health Organisation and the International Atomic Energy Agency. He said the United States, Britain, France and China were pushing hard for an early introduction of irradiation, and that with their support, its legalisation was a formality.

DAILY BEAT

A review of news from the Arabic press

Government's portfolio of shares is less than JD1 billion

★ The government's investments in shares of public shareholding companies are less than JD1 billion, in case shares owned by the Social Security Corporation, estimated at about JD 650 million, are excluded on the grounds that the corporation is not a government institution but a fund for future generation. Accordingly, the government's portfolio was only about JD 600 million in the third quarter of this year and the transferring of these investments to the private sector would take time, the minister of industry and trade has said. He pointed out that the Ministry of Planning is currently preparing a memorandum about the privatisation procedure to be presented, discussed and adopted. Noting that it would be uneconomic and unscientific to dispose of the shares at once to avoid negative effects on prices, the minister indicated that the government's portfolio includes shares of strategic importance. The minister said there are shares to large key companies, adding that if the government decides to sell, it would be only at the appropriate time and in an accurate way. Shares of companies considered of strategic importance should remain in national hands even if their ownership and management took a commercial aspect, he added. The rest of the companies can be relinquished by the government without much discussion but also at a suitable time and in an appropriate way (Al Aswaq).

Insurance against fire accounts for 6.6 per cent of total premiums

★ Insurance against fire is the least feasible type of insurance since it only covers a small portion of the overall volume of premiums earned by insurance companies. The latest figures show that premiums from fire insurance amounted to JD 10 million last year out of JD 66 in total premiums earned. In 1993, the premiums collected from the fire insurance totaled JD 9 million. The main clients for this type of insurance are factories and vital economic establishments (Al Aswaq).

Financial Markets

Foreign Exchange Market Summary (December 18-December 22, 1995)

AMMAN — The U.S. unit depreciated modestly against the market and sterling last week, while appreciating marginally against the yen. It ended the week 0.40 per cent lower against the mark, 0.42 per cent lower against sterling and 0.28 per cent higher against the yen.

The dollar witnessed substantial losses, against other major currencies Monday. Reports indicated that the on-going debate between the Congress and the U.S. administration over the U.S. budget, in addition to Russian parliamentary election results, were among the factors that contributed the most to the dollar's decline. Reports also indicated that growing fears that the two sides might not reach an agreement soon had a negative impact on the U.S. bond and stock markets. Uncertainty over whether the Federal Reserve Committee (FOMC) would lower interest rates the next day, also pressured the dollar.

The U.S. unit rose sharply against the mark and modestly the yen Tuesday, while stabilising against sterling. The dollar appreciated on the back of U.S. bond and stock market rallies after the Fed eased its monetary policy, causing the federal funds rate to decrease by 0.25 per cent to 5.50 per cent through open market operations, while keeping the discount rate unchanged at 5.25 per cent. Analysts also indicated that the FOMC decision came despite the debate over the U.S. budget deficit, which proved that the committee takes its decisions according to price pressures and economic growth factors prevailing in the U.S. economy, and is not influenced by political factors.

The dollar retreated against the mark and the yen Wednesday, however, while rising a bit against sterling. It lost ground as debate continued between the Congress and the U.S. administration over reducing the U.S. budget deficit. Reports indicated that traders were pessimistic that an agreement would be reached after the Congressional Republicans refused a compromise to reopen parts of the federal government operations, which kept 260 thousand federal workers out of work.

While the U.S. unit appreciated against other major currencies Thursday, it witnessed moderate losses against the mark and sterling at the end of the week. Reports indicated that the dollar's retreat was attributed to profit-taking ahead of the Christmas holiday. Comments by a Bundesbank official, who warned that further easing of U.S. monetary policy would fuel inflation, also contributed to the dollar's decline.

The U.S. unit, thus, ended the week at 1.4376 marks, 102.3 yen and at \$1.5430 to the pound.

| New York Closing Rates for Major Currencies Against the U.S. Dollar | | | | |
|---|---------------------|----------------------|----------------|--|
| Currency | Today Dec. 18, 1995 | Friday Dec. 22, 1995 | Percent Change | |
| Sterling Pound* | 1.5365 | 1.5430 | 0.42 % | |
| Deutsche Mark | 1.4433 | 1.4376 | 0.40 % | |
| Swiss Franc | 1.1634 | 1.1573 | 0.53 % | |
| French Franc | 4.9653 | 4.9195 | 0.94 % | |
| Japanese Yen | 102.03 | 102.30 | (0.26) % | |

| Euro-Currency Interest Rates* | | | | |
|-------------------------------|-------------|------------|-------------|------------|
| Currency | 1-Month (%) | 1-Year (%) | 1-Month (%) | 1-Year (%) |
| U.S. Dollar | 5.75 | 5.43 | 5.87 | 5.50 |
| Sterling Pound | 0.38 | 6.43 | 6.37 | 6.20 |
| Deutsche Mark | 3.93 | 3.56 | 3.88 | 3.54 |
| Swiss Franc | 1.81 | 1.50 | 1.93 | 1.81 |
| French Franc | 5.18 | 4.81 | 5.11 | 4.75 |
| Japanese Yen | 0.23 | 0.31 | 0.00 | 0.31 |

Interbank bid rates for accounts exceeding U.S. Dollars 1,000,000 or equivalent

| Central Bank of Jordan Exchange Rate Bulletin | | |
|---|--------|--------|
| Currency | Old | Offer |
| U.S. Dollar | 0.7080 | 0.7100 |
| Sterling Pound | 1.0899 | 1.0953 |
| Deutsche Mark | 0.4919 | 0.4944 |
| Swiss Franc | 0.6111 | 0.6142 |
| French Franc | 0.1438 | 0.1445 |
| Japanese Yen | 0.6012 | 0.6047 |
| Dutch Guilder | 0.4395 | 0.4417 |
| Swedish Krona | | |
| Italian Lira | 0.0446 | 0.0448 |
| Belgian Franc | | |

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Ajax top 1995 scene

PARIS (AFP) — Ajax Amsterdam completed their metamorphosis from top club in Europe to the best club in the world in 1995 when they beat Brazilians Gremio to lift the Intercontinental Cup.

That 4-3 win on penalties, following a 0-0 draw in Tokyo on Nov. 28, stretched their unbeaten run to 66 matches in all competitions and propelled them from Dutch superstars to world beaters.

Off the pitch, a fair share of controversy was also present in 1995 when Eric Cantona was banned for kung-fu kick, Patrice Loko went off the rails, a German player failed a drugs test, and Dynamo Kiev were banned from the European Champions Cup.

Gremio, with more of physical game than the aesthetic skill of neighbouring Brazilian clubs, were not expected to beat Louis Van Gaal's side and Ajax confirmed their favourites' status with their usual brand of entertaining, attacking football.

And, by late December, Ajax had still not lost a Dutch league game since a 2-1 loss to Willem II on May 8, 1994 — the last day of the 1993/94 season.

Of course victory in the European Champions Cup final on May 24 in Vienna — Ajax's first triumph since winning three years running from 1971-1973 — pushed five-times champions AC Milan into the background.

Ironically Frank Rijkaard, one of a Dutch trio who masterminded Milan's 1989 and 1990 European Cup wins, switched roles and excelled for Ajax this time.

Rijkaard's angled pass through the Milan defence was instrumental in creating Patrick Kluivert's 83rd minute goal for a 1-0 win. At 18, Kluivert was the youngest ever scorer in a Champions Cup final.

Meanwhile, Gremio won the Copa Libertadores, equivalent of the European Champions Cup, for the second time with a 4-2 aggregate scoreline over Colombia's Nacional of Medellin.

Like Brazil's 1994 World Cup winning team, Gremio's strengths were organisation and physical power rather than the flair-based sides more traditional in Brazil.

Gremio's most impressive win came in the quarter-finals when they pipped favourites Palmeiras 6-5 on aggregate.

In the 1994/95 season in Europe, a new sweep of the hush brought through Blackburn Rovers, Juventus, Real Madrid, Nantes and Borussia Dortmund as the winners of the major leagues.

Madrid clinched their 26th major title — their first since 1990 — to end Barcelona's run of four consecutive wins Spanish league wins.

Real's 2-1 victory over second-placed Deportivo La Coruna, watched by 105,000 fans at the Bernabeu stadium, clinched the title.

Chilean Ivan Zamorano hit the winner 10 minutes from time after Brazilian Bebeto had equalised Jose Amavisca's opening goal.

Borussia Dortmund won their fourth German title, their first in 32 years, by beating Hamburg 2-0 at home, while Werder Bremen, leading by a point and with better goal difference, fell 3-1 at Bayern Munich.

Dortmund coach Ottmar Hitzfeld could pat himself on the back with victory, particularly as strikers Stephane Chapuisat, Karlheinz Riedle, and Denmark's Flemming Povlsen were ruled out through injury late in the season.

Juventus heralded a new era in Italy to win their first title in nine years and become only the fourth team to complete the league and Cup double.

Juventus beat Parma 4-0 in Turin to clinch the league, and won 3-0 on aggregate against the same opponents to win the Italian Cup. But Parma at least managed a UEFA Cup win, with a 2-1 aggregate success over Juventus.

The Turin club thanked rejuvenated veteran Gianluca Vialli and new find Alessandro Del Piero, who they nearly sold to Parma, for their success.

Roberto Baggio was out injured for half the season, and was even unloaded to AC Milan at the end of the year, proving Juventus could do without the World Cup star.

Nantes won their first league title in 12 years, and seventh in all, but the successful squad was on the verge of dismantling. Defensive midfielder Christian Karembeu went to Sampdoria, Patrice Loko moved to Paris Saint Germain, and even Reynald Pedros, who eventually stayed, at first said he was looking for new pastures.

Nicolas Ouedec was injured during the early part of the 1995/96 defence of the title, and, not surprisingly, Nantes had a disastrous start to the season.

The people of Blackburn had been waiting even longer for a league title. Not since before the World War I, and not for 81 years, had they become the premier team in England.

They won by a single point to prevent Manchester United from winning three years running.

Blackburn, coached by Kenny Dalglish, drew at Liverpool, but thankfully Harry Redknapp's West Ham held Manchester United at 1-1 to enable Dalglish to become only the third manager to win with different clubs.

Herbert Chapman (Huddersfield Town and Arsenal) and Brian Clough (Derby County and Nottingham Forest) were other two. Dalglish, of course, also led Liverpool to the title during the 80s.

Blackburn's fellow English club Arsenal were also trying to create a record and become the first club to successfully defend the European Cup Winners Cup.

But a spectacular goal by Nwanyi, formerly of Arsenal's arch-rivals Tottenham Hotspur, in the dying seconds of the final earned Real Zaragoza a 2-1 win. Earlier John Hartson had cancelled out Juan Esnaider's opener for Zaragoza.

1995 had also been a year of scandals which inevitably rock such a high-profile sport.

Eric Cantona's Kungfu kick on a Crystal Palace fan on Jan. 29 earned him a worldwide ban till Sept. 30 and £20,000 fine.

It also led to criminal charges against the Manchester United star, and his punishment was to do community service as a football coach.

Patrice Loko, who had just signed for PSG from Nantes, went on a rampage across Paris in July caused by personal problems. He was arrested for drunkenness outside a nightclub where he had allegedly been yelling at cars.

Later, it was alleged he even exposed himself to a female police inspector. Dynamo Kiev were also banned from European competition for two seasons for attempting to bribe Spanish referee Antonio Lopez Nieto with mink coats and prostitutes in a European Champions Cup match against Greek club Panathinaikos.

And former German international striker Roland Wohlfarth was banned by the league for taking drugs. The 31-year-old VfL Bochum player tested positive for a stimulant at an indoor tournament in Leipzig.

Newcastle go 10 points clear

LONDON (AFP) — Newcastle manager Kevin Keegan could hardly hide his delight at the display of David Ginola after the Frenchman had inspired the 3-1 win over Nottingham Forest which leaves them 10 points clear at the head of the Premiership title race on Saturday.

Ginola, playing in an unfamiliar central striker's role, scored his first home goal for the club soon after Ian Woan had cancelled out Roly Lee's 11th-minute opener.

The French ace then teased and tormented the Forest side — a matador confronting a bull — before Robert Lee sealed victory with his eighth goal of the season 16 minutes from time.

"I don't know if he used super glue, but the ball seemed stuck to David's feet," drooled Keegan. "He never looked like he wouldn't go past people at any stage in the game."

"I have to say that it is his best game for us. In other games he's been brilliant for 45 minutes and been a genius for 10 or 15, but today he was a threat for the whole 90. Some of the things he did were exceptional."

Lee, confined to bed with flu for much of this week, took his season's goal haul to eight with a double strike as Kevin Keegan's title chasers moved 10 points clear of nearest rivals Manchester United, who visit Leeds on Sunday.

Tottenham missed the chance to leapfrog Manchester United and go second when they let slip a two-goal lead over bottom club Bolton, who clinched their first away point of the season in a 2-2 draw.

Scott Green and Icelandic



Manchester City's Michael Brown (right) clashes with Chelsea's Ruud Gullit during the Premier League game at Maine Road (Reuters photo)

international Gudni Bergsson netted in the 76th and 79th minutes respectively after Teddy Sheringham, with his 15th goal of the term, and Chris Armstrong, with his eighth, had given Spurs the advantage.

Liverpool went third after coming from behind to beat Arsenal 3-1 at Anfield with the help of a Robbie Fowler hat-trick, the fifth of his career, taking his season's tally to 18 with strikes after 40, 59 and 78 minutes.

His impressive show helped Liverpool to the three points after Ian Wright had opened the scoring for Arsenal from the penalty spot after seven minutes.

Anfield manager Roy Evans saluted his 20-year-old striker, saying: "I am not trying to force Terry Venables and I know Robbie is in his mind. His last two performances will have helped him and — like the Dutch striker, Patrick Kluivert — he

has shown that if you are good enough, you are old enough."

Arsenal manager Bruce Rioch was bitterly disappointed with the manner of the defeat and is planning to rebuild the walls around Highbury.

He said: "We were outplayed in the second half. We have got to get back to being a club that is ready to challenge for the title."

"We need to change one or two personnel at Arsenal. That might take the next three to four years."

Brazilian international Juninho produced a sparkling display to help Middlesbrough move into fifth spot with a 4-2 victory over West Ham at the Riverside Stadium.

He had a hand in all three of his side's first-half goals — scored by Norwegian Jan Aage Fjortoft, Neil Cox and Chris Morris.

Assistant manager Viv

Anderson said: "Juninho could have had a hat-trick. We will have to work on his finishing but his overall play was excellent."

Queens Park Rangers and Coventry clinched welcome wins to increase the pressure on Manchester City, who slumped 1-0 at home to Chelsea.

Despite winning their Bosman-inspired decision allowing them to field four foreign players City manager Alan Ball admitted his gamble of having three centre-forwards misfired.

Ball said: "I tried to play with three centre forwards — and when you do that you need them to stick the ball in the back of the net. They didn't do that — they missed three sitters in the first 10 minutes."

For QPR, Kevin Gallen's 54th-minute goal sealed their first win in 12 attempts — 1-0 over Aston Villa — and moved them above Alar-

Ball's side.

Coventry moved to within a point of City by recording only their third victory of the term, 2-1 against Everton at Highfield Road.

Noel Whelan, their recent £2-million (\$3-million) buy from Leeds, scored an 84th-minute winner on his home debut after Paul Rideout had cancelled out David Buss's opener for the Sky Blues.

Fellow strugglers Wimbledon salvaged a point at home to Blackburn, with Robbie Earle's 83rd-minute effort sealing a 1-1 draw after Alan Kimble's own goal had put Rovers in front.

A disappointed Blackburn boss Ray Harford said: "We were too wasteful in the first half when we should have had the game well won."

"You know you won't get 90 clear minutes against Wimbledon and they really came back at us. But I thought we had weathered the storm."

Becker will not play in Atlanta

HAMBURG (AP) — Reigning Olympic doubles tennis champion Boris Becker has said he won't defend his title at the summer games in Atlanta next year.

"I will definitely not play at the Olympic Games in Atlanta, neither in singles nor doubles. I have personal reasons," Becker told Sat 1 television at their Hamburg studios.

The three-time Wimbledon champion who turned 28 last month, was taping the interview in advance for a show entitled "Boris Becker Personally," which the commercial TV station plans to air late Friday evening.

Becker won the Olympic doubles championship at the 1992 Barcelona Games with countryman Michael Stich sharing the honour.

"With Wimbledon and the U.S. Open, I would be travelling eight weeks in a row," Becker said of the Olympics. "I can't do that."

Becker has said in the past while he still enjoys playing tennis, he relishes the time spent with his wife Barbara and son Noah Gabriel, who was born Jan. 18.

Ranked No. 4 in the world, Becker is also the current ATP World champion after defeating world No. 1 Pete Sampras in the finals in Frankfurt last month.

Becker said he had a long talk with his co-champion partner Stich last week. "If I would have played in Atlanta, then only together with him, and I would have gladly done it."

"What Michael does now, he will have to say himself," Becker said.

Stich is still recovering from a serious ankle injury he suffered while playing at a tournament in Austria preceding the ATP Championships. He has said he hopes to be ready for the Australian Open next month.

Spurs beat Rockets; Bulls win 13th in a row

SAN ANTONIO (R) — Avery Johnson seized his opportunity on Saturday to help the San Antonio Spurs spank the NBA champion Houston Rockets 110-95 for their fifth successive win.

Sean Elliott scored 26 points and Johnson added 25 and 11 assists in a well-rounded attack as the Spurs beat the Rockets for the sixth time in seven regular season contests sandwiched around a Western Conference finals loss to them last season.

The Spurs moved within 1½ games of the Rockets in the Midwest. Sam Cassell led Houston with a career-high 33 points.

In Chicago, the dynamic duo of Michael Jordan and Scottie Pippen claimed another victory as the NBA-best Bulls overcame a slow start to beat the Utah Jazz for their 13th win in a row.

Chicago fell behind 20-10 but used their defence to charge back and maintain a perfect 13-0 home mark. Jordan scored 30 points and Pippen pumped in 28 points for the 23-2 Bulls.

Karl Malone led the Jazz with 22 points, but was held scoreless over the last 16 minutes. John Stockton, the only other Jazz player in double figures, had 10 points.

In New York, Patrick Ewing scored 40 points as the New York Knicks rebounded from an embarrassing loss to defeat the Toronto Raptors 103-89.

New York, beaten 111-90 Friday by the Orlando Magic, broke open a two-point game with a 7-0 run in the fourth quarter.

Rookie Damon Stoudamire had 25 points for Toronto.

In Detroit, Penny Hardaway scored 16 of his 22 points during a third-quarter run as the Orlando Magic pounded the Pistons 94-79.

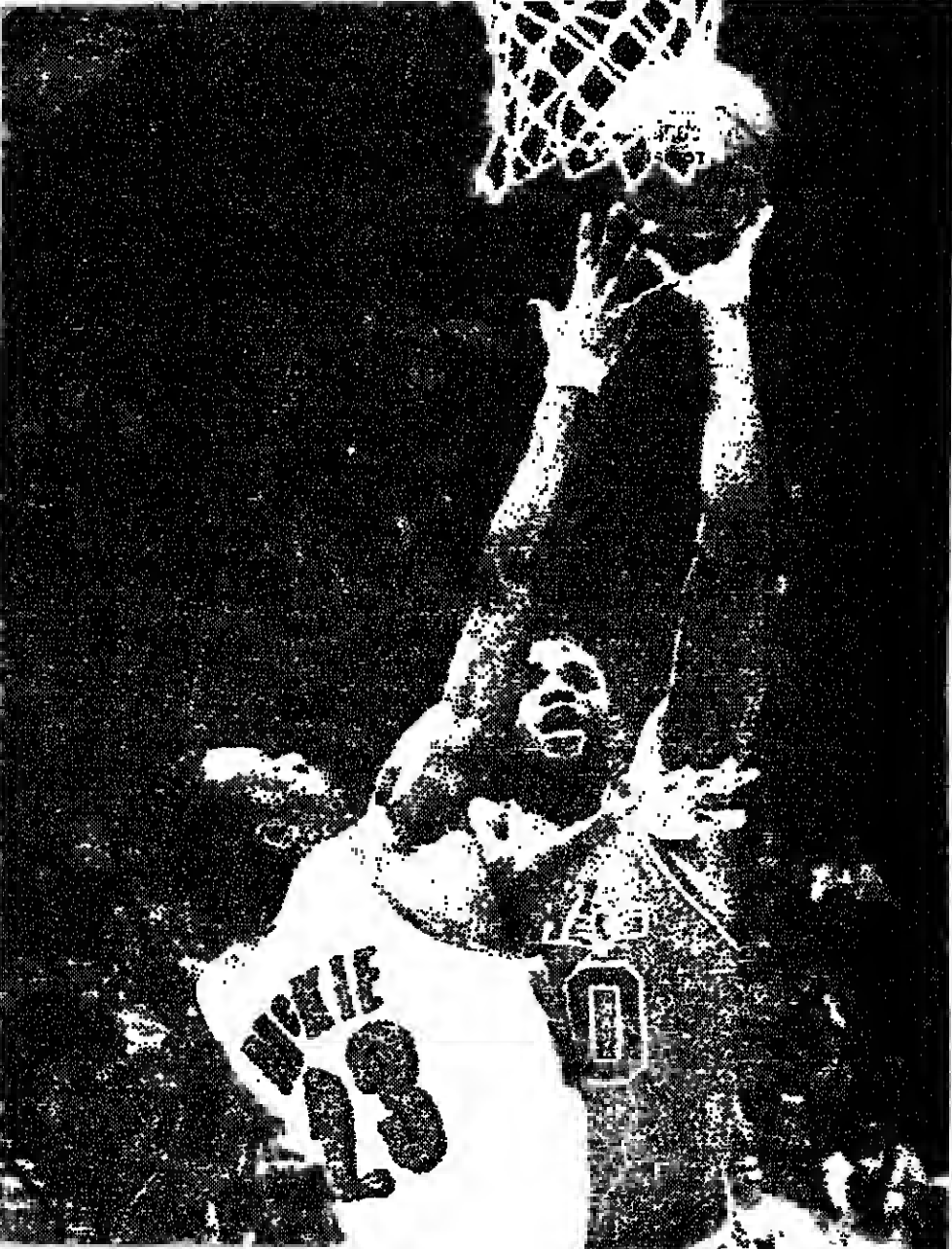
Nick Anderson also had 22 points for Orlando, while Allan Houston finished with 19 points for Detroit, who had won three in a row.

In Charlotte, the Hornets held the Miami Heat to seven points in the second quarter on the way to an 87-75 victory.

Larry Johnson led Charlotte with 22 points. Kevin Willis scored 22 points for Miami.

In Cleveland, Terrell Brandon nailed a five-foot running jumper in the lane as time expired to lift the Cleveland Cavaliers to a 97-96 victory over the Indiana Pacers.

After Ricky Pierce's jumper put Indiana ahead 96-91 with 1:40 remaining, consecutive tip-ins by Chris Mills



Calbert Cheaney (right) of the Washington Bullets shoots over Aaron McKie (23) of the Portland Trail Blazers during the first quarter of their NBA game (Reuters photo)

and Michael Cage narrowed the deficit to 96-95 with 30 seconds to play.

Pierce then missed on a layup and Brandon came away with the ball and drove down the court to hit the winning shot.

Mills scored a career-high 27 points for the Cavs.

At Minnesota, Isaiah Rider scored 26 points and Tom Gugliotta had 20 points and 12 rebounds to lead the Minnesota Timberwolves to a 111-98 victory over the Dallas Mavericks, giving coach Flip Saunders his first NBA win.

Saunders replaced Bill Blair as head coach last Mon-

day and lost three close games before notching the win.

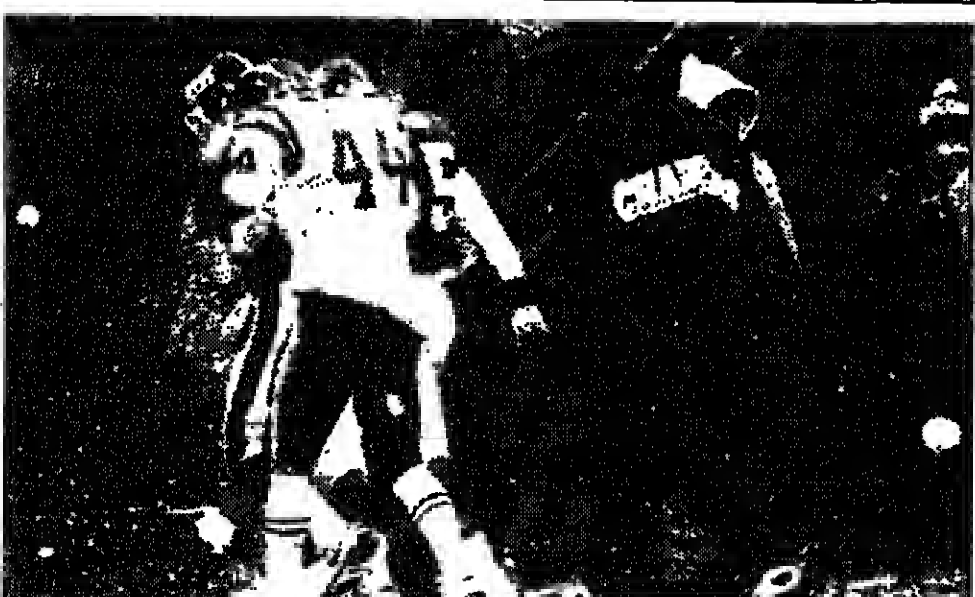
In Philadelphia, P.J. Brown scored 18 points to lead the New Jersey Nets over the Philadelphia 76ers 98-85 in their first meeting since their six-player trade.

In Portland, Cedric Ceballos scored 23 points and Anthony Peeler and Vladi Divac each added 19 points as the Los Angeles Lakers handed the Trail Blazers their fifth straight defeat 102-99.

Portland got 20 points and 10 assists from Rod Strickland.

In Denver, Loy Vaught scored 21 points to lead six players in double figures as the Los Angeles Clippers beat the Denver Nuggets 107-92.

The Clippers won for just the third time in 16 games.



Members of the San Diego Chargers leave the field as fans pelt them with snowballs after they defeated the New York Giants 27-17, at Giants Stadium in East Rutherford (Reuters photo)

Chargers, Colts clinch playoff berths

EAST RUTHERFORD, New Jersey (R) — The San Diego Chargers overcame a 17-3 halftime deficit and a boorish barrage of ice snowballs from unruly fans to beat the New York Giants 27-17 on Saturday and clinch an NFL playoffs berth.

Joining the Chargers into the post-season parade were the Indianapolis Colts, who beat the New England Patriots 10-7 on Cary Blanchard's 30-yard field goal with 5:51 left to book their first trip to the playoffs since 1987.

In Saturday's other NFL game, the playoff-bound Detroit Lions mauled the Tampa Bay Buccaneers 37-10 to stay in the running for the Central Division title.

At Giants Stadium, Shaun Gayle's 99-yard interception return with 5:44 left in the fourth quarter snapped a 17-17 tie for the Chargers (9-7), who closed the season with five wins to keep alive their chance for another trip to the Super Bowl.

The defending AFC champions pulled it out despite losing starting quarterback Stan Humphries in the first quarter due to a sprained

neck and concussion suffered in a jarring hit by Giant pass rusher Michael Strahan and Jamal Duff.

Unruly spectators nearly caused the referee to declare the NFL's first-ever forfeit with their snowball-throwing but the Chargers decided their fate on the field with an inspired comeback in the second half.

Two touchdown drives after intermission, each requiring a fourth-down conversion, brought San Diego even at 17-17.

Rodney Culver ran two yards on a 4th-and-1 from the Giants 13 to set up Aaron Hayden's eight-yard touchdown run in the third quarter that closed the gap to 17-10.

The crowd at the Meadowlands pelted the Charger sideline with snowballs for most of the second half.

After Chargers equipment manager Sid Brooks was hit in the face and knocked out briefly by a snowball, referee Ron Blum warned the fans over the public address system the game would be forfeited if the snowball-throwing continued.

"The whole thing — endangerment of the players

and officials on the field, the coaches on the sideline — were a concern," said Blum.

"To be honest, I was very close to forfeiting the game."

Fourteen people were arrested and more than 100 were ejected for hurling snowballs.

"I was concerned for the safety of our players," Chargers coach Bobby Ross said. "That's an embarrassment for the NFL."

Giants coach Dan Reeves, whose team finished 5-11, said: "The snowballing was classless. I told the referee that if he had to call it, to do so."

At Tampa Bay, linebacker Tracy Scroggins returned a fumble 81 yards for a score and Brett Perriman added a 91-yard touchdown reception for the red-hot Lions (10-6) who stretched their winning streak to seven.

Detroit's victory put pressure on the Green Bay Packers, who need a win at home against the Pittsburgh Steelers Sunday to clinch the Central Division title. If the Packers lose, the Lions win the division.

Tomorrow's another day for Olympic towns

ATLANTA (AFP) — The 1996 Atlanta Olympics passed the one-year-to-go mark juggling a shrinking budget, sinking dormitories, irate international sports officials and sorely dissatisfied ticket applicants.

At the time, several new Olympic venues passed their first international tests with flying colours and details of Olympic year events such as the torch relay were unveiled with great fanfare as Atlanta Games supremo Billy Payne maintained his relentlessly optimistic stance.

"It's an impossibility that these Games will not be a resounding success," Payne said, a view he was called upon to repeat as often as a mantra in 1995.

Revised budget figures released in October showed less sponsor money than expected, more ticket revenue than projected and a break-even budget with little margin for error.

Organisers have contracts or money in hand for 86 per cent of the \$1.58 billion budget, leaving \$227 million unaccounted for.

The revised figures left the Olympic contingency fund, once projected at \$116 million, at only \$30 million.

Sponsorship funds had been expected to produce \$513.4 million but are now projected to pay off with only about \$428.1 million.

Ticket money was anticipated to bring in \$261.2 million in funds, but that source is expected to bring \$422 million now. Higher than expected demand is one reason.

But that high demand led to one of the Games' biggest black eyes so far — when tens of thousands of ticket applicants, including parents of Olympic swimming champion Summer Sanders — sent in hundreds of thousands of dollars with their applications only to come up empty in the lottery.

ACOG managed to find a silver dollar lining. By hanging onto the refund cheques for six months they earned millions in interest.

Of these who got tickets in the lottery, many ended up with events they did not request, fuelling anger that four million tickets, many for premier events such as athletics, swimming and opening and closing ceremonies, were reserved for corporate sponsors, politicians, international VIPs and individual Olympic patrons.

There were also more immediate problems.

Work on the 85,000-seat Olympic stadium, the showpiece of the Games, was stopped for two days after builder Jack Falls died when a light tower where he was working collapsed and sent him plummeting 50 feet.

The accident was later ascribed to a design flaw in the towers.

Atlanta organisers also had to fend off criticism of the sailing venue by officials of the International Yacht Racing Union.

International equestrian officials are battling with Georgia state agricultural authorities over quarantine options for horses who show exposure to a tick-borne disease.

But the mysterious problem of the sinking dormitories was solved and the two buildings, which are to house some 8,000 athletes and officials, ruled safe even though their foundations had sunk six inches in one case and nine in the other.

The rowing venue received good early reviews from competitors at the U.S. national championships, as did the aquatic center which hosted the Pan Pacific Games.

"We realise there will be increasing attention on many of our programmes — transportation, medical, accreditation and security," Payne said at the one-year mark in July.

"The time has come."

The time remained more comfortably far off for organisers of the 2000 Summer Games at Sydney and the 1998 Winter Games at Nagano.

Sydney officials saw their promises of a "Green Games" under attack by environmentalists, who said toxic pollution at the proposed Homebush Bay site was more severe than previously thought.

Organisers moved quickly to counter the claims, and on the upside Sydney signed a record 715 million U.S. dollar deal for the American television rights to the Games, and signed up its first corporate sponsors IBM and Telstra.

Nagano organisers warned the International Olympic Committee that the 1998 Games might end up in the red if the IOC failed to increase Japan's share of sponsorship money to offset the rise in the yen.

Salt Lake City won the 2002 Winter Games by a massive margin in the first round of voting, ahead of Ostersund (Sweden), Sion (Switzerland) and Quebec City (Canada).

The third year of the Olympiad closed with the NBC television network taking a \$2.3 billion gamble on Olympic gold to come, signing a deal worth that much with the IOC for the U.S. rights to the 2004 and 2008 Summer Games and the 2006 Winter Games.

NBC had already beaten Rupert Murdoch's Fox network in bidding for the Sydney Games, and apparently wanted to prevent a future super-hid from Murdoch.

NBC Sports president Dick Ebersol said: "We have carried on a love affair with the Olympics," he said. "It was only right at this point to get married and open a joint checking account."

Graf pays Christmas call on jailed father

BONN (AFP) — The family of tennis champion Steffi Graf has made a quick pre-Christmas visit to cheer up her father Peter, in jail pending investigations into tax evasion allegations, Bild Am Sonntag reported Sunday.

World number one Steffi, her mother Heidi and brother Michael paid a 45-minute call Friday on Peter Graf, detained in Mannheim since August 2, the paper said. It was the first family reunion since Peter Graf was remanded.

Steffi, who has just undergone a foot operation, tearfully embraced her father and promised to pay however much it took to win his release on bail, Bild reported. The paper added she was not allowed to bring along a Christmas present.

Peter Graf, 57, is spending Christmas behind bars after a



World No. 1 Steffi Graf, under strain following the arrest of her father on tax fraud charges, carries a heavy load as she leaves a practice session (File photo)

Mannheim judge rejected a demand by his lawyers for his release. Judicial authorities will review the case for bail

on December 29.

Bild quoted sources close to the investigation into Steffi Graf's tax affairs as saying that Peter Graf was likely to reappear before a tribunal hearing in February.

Graf, who administers his superstar daughter's earnings put at around 180 million marks (\$130 million), is suspected of withholding details of her full earnings from tax authorities since she turned professional in 1982.

The 26-year-old player is believed to have paid just 10 million marks in tax during that period.

Steffi herself is still herself under investigation, but Eer Spiegel magazine said it is unlikely she will be formally accused as tax officials working on the case believe her father withheld from her information on the state of the player's finances.

Fiorentina hold leaders Milan

ROME (R) — Fiorentina forced a 2-2 home draw with AC Milan in Italy's table-topping clash on Saturday after goals from George Weah and Roberto Baggio had twice put the Serie A leaders in front.

With third-placed Parma slipping to a surprising 1-0 home defeat to Vicenza and Roma enjoying a rare win against champions Juventus in Turin, the outcome left Milan one point ahead of Fiorentina.

Liberian Weah gave Milan the perfect start with a back-header off Croat Zvonimir Boban's 12th minute corner.

Within a minute, the home side drew level as Franco Baresi's last-ditch tackle on

Argentine Gabriel Batistuta unwittingly left Anselmo Robbati with an open goal.

In the 54th minute, Baggio, playing on the ground where he started his career, looked to have clinched the winner with a penalty, but Francesco Baiano turned home Rui Costa's 73rd minute free kick to maintain Fiorentina's unbeaten home record.

Roberto Murgita's 57th minute header brought Parma's 11-match unbeaten run to a halt and gave Vicenza their first win at Parma in 47 years.

Argentine Abel Balbo played a big role as Roma romped to their first victory over Juventus in Turin for 13 years.

On the brink of halftime, he turned home a loose ball after Angelo Peruzzi failed to hold Luigi di Biagio's long-range effort.

Then, with his side down to 10 men after Marco Lanna's dismissal, Balbo pressured Ciro Ferrara into an own-goal.

Dutchman Aron Winter and Giuseppe Signori both scored twice as Lazio moved into fourth spot behind Parma with a 5-1 victory over Atalanta at the Olympic stadium.

Internazionale's England midfielder Paul Ince was sent off after clashing with Cagliari's Marco Sanaa, who also received his marching orders.

Marco Branca scored a

hat-trick for Inter in the 4-0 triumph. He was on target in the 24th, 29th and 68th minutes.

Fiorentina's clash with Milan was billed a showdown between Weah, tipped as 1995 European footballer of the year, and Batistuta, the top division's joint leading scorer with 10 goals.

Both were decisive in the space of two minutes — first, Weah with his spectacular header, then Batistuta with the forceful run that set up Fiorentina's instant equaliser.

Until Baiano's opportunistic equaliser, Baggio, yet to capture his best form since joining Milan from Juventus, threatened to steal the show.



Pete Sampras

Monica Seles

An amazing year for Pete Sampras; a surprising one for Seles

BY THE time his body finally gave out at the Davis Cup final in Moscow, cramped and fatigued and sore all over, Pete Sampras had put the last touches on an amazing year.

An American championship. A third straight Wimbledon. A third U.S. Open title. A third consecutive No. 1 ranking at year's end.

He became the first player to earn \$5 million in a year, the biggest money winner in tennis history with \$21.7 million.

Beyond all those achievements, though, Sampras revealed a depth of character perhaps more important than any of his considerable skills on court.

His year began with the devastating diagnosis in Australia that his coach, and good friend, Tim Gullikson, had inoperable brain tumors.

Sampras played through his tears in an emotionally wrenching match against Jim Courier and reached the final before falling to a near-perfect Andre Agassi.

Throughout the year, Sampras shunted to Gullikson's home in the midwestern United States between tournaments, watching him go through radiation treatment. But Sampras handled the strain maturely, winning Wimbledon again at 23 and

dedicating the victory to Gullikson, who watched from home.

As Sampras steered himself, so too did Steffi Graf show remarkable strength in a year she called the best of her career.

Graf didn't complete a Grand Slam, as she did in 1988. But she won every major event she played — the French, Wimbledon and the U.S. Open — plus the WTA Tour championship, she won 47 of the 49 matches and banked \$2.5 million.

defeat in the U.S. Open against Monica Seles, who played brilliantly in only her second tournament since being stabbed 2½ years earlier by a fan of Graf.

Seles, co-ranked No. 1 with Graf, surprised herself and everyone else by winning her first event, the Canadian Open, and came within one dubious call on a serve of beating Graf in straight sets in New York. Seles served a ball she thought was an ace on set point in their first-set tiebreaker, and skipped to-

A sore knee sustained from too much practice and too many matches on hard courts in her brief comeback caused Seles to pull out of the other tournaments she had planned to play after the open. But she's planning to resume her career in January at the Australian.

The dominance of Sampras and Graf throughout the year overshadowed superb years by other players, especially Agassi and Thomas Muster.

Agassi held the ATP tour's No. 1 spot for 30 weeks after gaining it for the first time in April. He was the tour's most consistent player until his chest injury later in the year, winning a career-high seven titles in 11 finals and finishing No. 2 for the second year in a row.

TENNIS REVIEW

As dominant as she was, Graf suffered mightily all year with back and foot injuries and with a tax investigation in Germany that sent her father-manager, Peter, to jail.

"It's an incredible end to an unbelievable year," Graf said after taking the WTA title in five sets over fellow German Anke Huber. "I've definitely passed a few barriers that I didn't think I could... I went to the French and U.S. Opens not very well prepared, not playing very many tournaments. Physically, because I haven't been able to train, I haven't been really ready."

She was as ready as she had to be to claw back from near-

ward the sideline as if she'd won. But a linesman called it wide, and a rattled and tiring Seles wound up dropping the set and match.

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N.B.: External candidates who applied before and were invited for a test or interviews are requested not to apply again; candidates should mention on their application for which GRADES they wish to be considered.

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NORTH
♠ 8 3
♥ 6 5
♦ J 8 4 3
♣ 8 6 5

WEST
♠ A 5 4
♥ K J 8
♦ 7 5 2
♣ Q J 10

The bidding has proceeded:
SOUTH WEST NORTH EAST
2♠ Pass 2♥ Pass
3♥ Pass 3♠ Pass
4♠ Pass 4♠ Pass

Opening lead: Ace of ♠
One of the first maxims we were taught is: "When in doubt, lead trumps." That is probably the worst reason in the world for a trump lead. Unless you have a specific target in mind, almost any other lead is better.

South's two-club opening bid was artificial and forcing, and North's

first two bids were negative. Thereafter, the auction was natural, with South describing a powerful two-suiter and North promising no more than a preference for spades.

The normal opening lead might seem to be the queen of clubs, but West had a valid reason for choosing a trump. When opener has shown a two-suited hand and you have one of the suits controlled and the other becomes trumps, it is a good idea to prevent declarer from ruffing losers on the table.

Had West led a club, declarer would have won and banded down

the ace of hearts, followed by a low heart. Even a belated shift to ace and another trump would permit declarer to ruff a heart in dummy, and the only losers would be two hearts and the ace of trumps.

With the heart suit well under control, West set out to limit dummy's ability to ruff. After the lead of ace of trumps and another, declarer had no play. West won the second heart and persisted with a trump and, in the fullness of time, the defenders raked in three heart tricks and the ace of trumps for a one-trick set.

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Israel says it is time for peace with Gulf

CAIRO (Agencies) — Israeli Foreign Minister Ehud Barak said in Cairo Sunday the time had come for oil-rich Gulf Arab states and the Maghreb countries to make peace with Israel.

"I believe that the time is ripe for the Gulf states and the Maghreb countries to make peace with Israel but I don't know when they will find the right time," Mr. Barak told a joint news conference with Egyptian Minister Amr Musa.

He said Egypt, which enjoys good relations with Gulf states, would have a role to play by "influencing them to join the peace process and establishing relations with Israel."

The Jewish state, which has successfully made peace with Egypt, the Palestinians and Jordan, is eager to establish ties with Gulf states to boost its trade and end 47 years of economic boycott imposed by the Arabs since Israel was created.

Peace talks with Syria and Lebanon have picked up momentum recently with Israel and Syria giving optimistic signals for a breakthrough.

"We hope to reach peace with the Syrians and the Lebanese but I cannot really make any promises, it is too early to know the real readiness of the other side," Mr. Barak said.

He added: "We expect President Assad to be crea-

tive, flexible and to approach every subject in a broad minded way. We are ready to do the same with Syria. We feel warmer response coming from Syria but ... we will have to wait and see what will come out of the negotiations."

Mr. Musa, who along with Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak had talks with Mr. Assad on Saturday, said the Syrian leader was keen on reactivating the peace process with Israel.

"We see there is progress in the general climate, in the new proposal on the Israeli-Syrian peace track. There is optimism in this direction," Mr. Musa said.

Mr. Assad, speaking in public for the first time since Syria and Israel decided to restart their talks, told a news conference on Saturday that Israel was showing "more openness and greater flexibility."

Syria and Israel are set to resume their negotiations in the United States on Dec. 27.

Four years of on-off negotiations between Israel and Syria have failed to resolve differences over terms for an Israeli withdrawal from the Golan Heights, seized by the Jewish state in the 1967 Middle East war.

The talks have been stalled for six months since Syria refused to pursue military discussions with Israel, angered by an Israeli demand

to leave an early-warning station behind Syrian lines after withdrawal.

Mr. Barak arrived in Cairo on Saturday night on a two-day visit and is expected to meet Mr. Mubarak before leaving Monday.

Meanwhile, Egypt welcomed an implicit commitment by Israeli Prime Minister Shimon Peres to renounce his country's nuclear weapons after peace is established in the Middle East.

Mr. Musa said he discussed the issue with his Israeli counterpart here Sunday after Mr. Peres said Israel would give up the nuclear "option" after a comprehensive peace was concluded.

"It was generally favourable," Mr. Musa said of Peres' announcement last Thursday, which stuck by the Israeli policy of neither confirming nor denying that the country possessed nuclear weapons.

"I believe that this is a good and viable opening but still precision is needed," said Mr. Musa.

Mr. Barak said, "the Israeli position has not changed."

"We have a lot more urgent and immediate problems on our agenda: 'To go ahead with (peace talks with) the Syrians and Lebanese and to establish diplomatic relations between Israel and the Maghreb' countries of North Africa."



JORDANIAN-ISRAELI TALKS: Foreign Minister Abdul Karim Al Kabariti (right) holds talks with Israeli Deputy Foreign Minister Eli Dayan (centre) who arrived in Amman earlier in the day. The meeting was attended by Israeli ambassador to Jordan Shimon Shamir (Petra photo)

Iran slams funds for anti-Iran action

NICOSIA (Agencies) — Iran condemned as "outright terrorist operations" moves in the United States to fund covert action against it, the Iranian News Agency IRNA said on Sunday.

It quoted Iran's Foreign Ministry Spokesman Mahmoud Mubammadi as slamming what it described as the allocation of funds by the U.S. House of Representatives for operations against the Islamic republic.

"The decision amounted to outright terrorist operations and was against international law," he said.

It was apparently referring to U.S. House of Representatives Speaker Newt Gingrich's intervention earlier this month in U.S. congressional budget negotiations to push for a new covert action programme to destabilise the Iranian government.

He demanded about \$18 million in funding for the action, the U.S. daily Los Angeles Times had reported.

The Clinton administration and Republican leaders in the Senate had opposed the

proposal because they believed it would be ineffective. The Senate on Wednesday passed a bill to tighten sanctions against companies which trade with Iran or Libya in oil and gas sectors. Iran's chief judge dismissed the new sanctions, saying other states would pursue their own interests.

The bill would invoke identical sanctions on Iran's petroleum industry. The Clinton administration has approved the bill's Iranian language but has not decided about the Libyan sanction, an amendment to the original bill. Both countries are on the U.S. state department list of countries that export terrorism.

Approval of the bill came Wednesday night on a voice vote, with no debate. The measure now goes to the House of Representatives, where similar bills are pending.

Libya has been since the mid-1980s a target of U.S. restrictions on Americans working there.

In April 1992 the United Nations put Libya under international sanctions restrict-

ing diplomatic relations and barring arms sales and air travel, later extended to cover most equipment for Libya's oil industry. The U.N. Security Council acted at the behest of the United States and Britain to punish Col. Muammar Qadhafi for refusing to surrender for trial two suspects in the Pan Am bombing.

A device exploded aboard the jumbo jet Dec. 21, 1988, over Lockerbie, Scotland. The resulting crash killed 259 crew and passengers, including many Americans coming home for Christmas, and 11 Lockerbie residents on the ground. The United States and Britain indicted two Libyans alleged to be agents of Qadhafi on charges they carried out the attack.

"Libya pays for its sponsorship of terrorism with its oil money," said Sen. Alfonse D'Amato, the new bill's sponsor. "Therefore it is only logical that we deprive Libya of the means to fund these actions."

Sen. Edward M. Kennedy, sponsor of the Libya amendment, said he was motivated

by the need "to see that the terrorists charged with the terrorist bombing are brought to justice."

"This is a significant step, and it is especially appropriate that the Senate has taken this action on the seventh anniversary of that despicable atrocity."

It was unclear how effective the bill might be even if it becomes law.

Anthony H. Cordesman, a Washington expert on Middle East security, said its effect would be mostly symbolic because firms could easily avoid the proposed sanctions.

As an example, he said a Swiss bank could easily form a subsidiary to invest in Libya, thus avoiding U.S. sanctions on the bank itself.

Mr. Cordesman said the law would also be subject to challenge from governments objecting to official U.S. action against firms operating legally under their own government's laws. This issue of U.S. "extraterritoriality" on other questions has troubled relations with many countries.

Yemen welcomes mediation in Red Sea islands dispute

SANAA (Agencies) — President Ali Abdullah Saleh on Sunday welcomed the mediation of Ethiopia and Egypt to solve a row between Yemen and Eritrea over control of Red Sea islands and said he wanted to resolve the dispute peacefully.

Mr. Saleh, in a meeting with Ethiopian Foreign Minister Seyoum Mesfin on Sunday, said Yemen's stand was "firm in rejecting a resort to force and sticking to dialogue to solve the difference," the official Saba news agency reported.

Ethiopia and Egypt have offered to mediate in an effort to solve the dispute.

An Egyptian envoy met Mr. Saleh Saturday.

Mr. Mesfin said he expected a "quick resolution" to the conflict between Yemen and Eritrea.

"Mr. Mesfin told Saba agency that the 'situation is ripe for a peaceful solution to the conflict, which can only be resolved through dialogue'."

Before he left Yemen, Mr. Mesfin said he "deeply believed a quick resolution" to

the conflict would be reached.

In a conciliatory gesture, Eritrea said Sunday it had contacted the International Committee of the Red Cross to coordinate the release of 195 Yemeni soldiers taken prisoner during a battle for the disputed island of Hanish Al Kabir.

This meets one of Yemen's conditions for the opening of talks after Eritrean force captured the island Dec. 18 after a three-day battle in which nine soldiers were killed.

Yemen has demanded the release of prisoners and the withdrawal of Eritrean troops from Hanish Al Kabir ahead of any negotiations on the status of the strategic island.

Jean-Francois Sangue, a ICRC official, told AFP in Asmara that he had arrived at the Eritrean capital from Addis Ababa to oversee the prison transfer.

"We have offered our services. I am here to confirm the offer by the Eritrean authorities to free the prisoners," Mr. Sangue said. "It is too early to enter into the

details."

Yemen's Deputy Prime Minister, Abdel Wahab, Al Ansi, said during a visit to Qatar that his government would prefer to resolve the territorial conflict in bilateral negotiations and not take the case before the International Court of Justice.

He told the official Qatari News Agency that bringing the issue before the court in the Hague would be a "long" process.

"We want to resolve the problem through bilateral negotiations, and if we don't achieve this, we can then turn to international justice," said Mr. Ansi, who also stressed the "need for cooperation between the two countries."

According to Sunday's edition of the Yemen Times, Mr. Mesfin has proposed a three-point plan involving the release of Yemeni prisoners to the International Committee of the Red Cross, the evacuation of the Hanish archipelago by both sides and arbitration by the International Court of Justice in the Hague.

Faulty signals behind Egypt's train crash

CAIRO (R) — Stalled control system and faulty signals made two crowded trains crash in thick fog, killing 75 people, the train drivers were quoted on Sunday as saying.

Egyptian newspapers quoted both drivers, detained for four days for questioning, as saying a signal just outside Badrasheen station had given one of the trains a green light while the other was stopped at a crossing.

Thursday's crash was the worst to hit Egypt's accident-prone railway system for over 15 years and highlighted the

poor safety record of level-crossing systems.

Eyewitnesses in the town of Badrasheen, 28 kilometres south of the capital Cairo, said the early-morning train taking about 120 workers south to the town of Beni Suef rammed a train to Assiut City from behind at high speed.

One carriage rode up on top of the others and two derailed, one of them onto wooden stalls by the side of the track.

Mohammad Metwali Othman, the driver of the first

train, said his control systems had made the train stop automatically at the signal in spite of it giving him a "go" signal, the newspapers reported.

"The driver of the second train felt the train's signalling system was stalled on leaving the station so he disconnected it," the Al Ahran daily said.

He passed three semaphors which gave him green signals until he reached the fourth semaphor, at which the first train was stopped, but it also gave him the green light.

Police say the first train, travelling to Assiut, had about 220 people aboard. The trains should have been about five minutes apart but the Assiut train had slowed down because of the fog, police Coloeel Mohammad Ibrahim said.

Residents said the stretch of track around Badrasheen was notoriously dangerous, with 43 people killed in a head-on collision near the local station in 1992 and 18 killed in 1993 at a collision two stations away.

First U.S. attack helicopters head for Bosnia Sarajevo rivals told to evacuate frontlines

SARAJEVO (Agencies) — Serb and government forces in the Bosnian capital have been given specific orders to evacuate front-line zones as called for by Bosnia's peace plan, IFOR officials said Sunday.

The rival forces that have fought each other for nearly four years must withdraw from certain points along the front lines by Wednesday, the stipulated seven-day period since NATO forces took over in Bosnia.

Maps were presented Saturday to senior officers of the Bosnian government and Bosnian Serb armies at a meeting with General Robert Rideau, the Implementation Force (IFOR) commander in the French sector, which covers the capital.

"The main point of (Saturday's) joint military commission was to outline the zones that have to be vacated by military forces by (Dec. 27). Following preliminary work it was formally presented to the parties. It seems to be accepted (by the parties)," IFOR spokesman Lieutenant Colonel Mark Rayner said.

IFOR spokesman Colonel Richard Pernot said forces would withdraw from "trenches, look-out posts, bunkers and certain buildings."

The pullouts will be the first since the start of NATO's peace enforcement operation, although French IFOR troops have already removed or bulldozed checkpoints around the capital that

enabled the Serbs to choke the city for 44 months of siege.

The withdrawal precedes the full pullout of Bosnian Serb armed forces from large parts of the capital that are due to revert to government control. Under the Dayton accord signed this month by the leaders of Bosnia's warring sides, this withdrawal must be completed 45 days after the transfer of authority to NATO, Feb. 3.

Col. Pernot said French troops would move into the specified areas to monitor compliance with the first deadline, which expires 11:00 a.m. (1000 GMT) Wednesday.

"The Serbs and the Bosnians have their obligations, and we wait to see what they will do," Col. Pernot said. The front lines affected by the orders, he added, were to the northeast of the city, as well as Stup, Ilidza and Sarajevo's airport, lying to the south and west of the capital, and lines bordering Grbavica, a southern city suburb held by the Serbs.

For the Bosnian Serbs in these areas, this initial process could spark the mass exodus threatened by many Serbs in areas due to revert to government control have warned they will not stay and live under Sarajevo's rule but leave and torch their homes as they go.

U.N. aid officials said Sunday that there was no evidence yet of a mass move-

ment. "It's very confused," UNCHR spokesman Kris Janowski said. "Some people may be leaving with their furniture and then coming back. It does not have a mass character. People are probably going to stay with their relatives. It is not a situation where you will have thousands of people stranded without help."

Meanwhile, U.S. army helicopters left Hungary for Bosnia for the first time on Sunday to protect other NATO aircraft helping to keep the peace in Bosnia.

Three AH-64 Apache attack helicopters and five UH-60 Black Hawk transport helicopters left a staging area in Kaposvar, Hungary to take up stations in the northern city of Tuzla.

The Apaches, designed to destroy tanks and armed with hellfire missiles, rockets and cannon, will provide aerial firepower while the Black Hawks will carry supplies and troops and evacuate people needing medical care.

Commanders warned air crews before takeoff to beware of surface-to-air (SA) missiles whose radar continues to "paint" NATO aircraft in violation of the peace accord signed this month to end war in the Balkans.

"If you are painted by SA radar, then that is considered hostile intent," Lieutenant Colonel Alan Swain, commander of the Apache battalion normally based in Germany, told the pilots in a

pre-flight briefing.

Rules of engagement for "Operation Joint Endeavour" allow the Apaches to try to knock out any anti-aircraft radar stations that lock on to allied aircraft.

Captain Michael Mahony, leading the task force Command into Tuzla, instructed the Black Hawks being escorted by the Apaches to take evasive action if they encountered small arms fire from the ground, as happened to NATO aircraft Friday.

"The Apaches will take care of whatever has to be taken care of," said Capt. Mahony, from Warwick, Rhode Island.

Capt. Mahony also told pilots to keep their aircraft close together when flying over Bosnia. "We want to keep it as close as possible because of the small arms fire," he said.

As pilots loaded bullets into the 9mm pistols they carry, Capt. Mahony warned them not to land in open fields in Bosnia if they encounter mechanical problems for fear of land mines.

Pilots in the 4th aviation brigade have said small arms fire from the ground poses one of the most significant threats to their aircraft.

When fully deployed, the brigade will patrol separation zones to ensure compliance with the treaty, bring their firepower to bear on violators, and ferry troops and supplies.

10 killed in Kabul shelling

KABUL (AFP) — Ten civilians were wounded, three of them seriously, in nighttime rocket barrages on two residential areas of Kabul, witnesses and hospital staff said Sunday.

A young mother and her five children living in a central area of the capital were among the injured, leaving the woman and two children in critical condition, doctors said. Four other people were injured in a southern suburb during the night.

A salvo of four Soviet-made BM 21 rockets, which hit two family homes in the city-centre Saturday evening, were fired by the Taliban militia who are besieging the Afghan capital, army sources said.

The family injured in the attack on central Kabul was living in a dank basement of a half-built house in the plush suburb of Wazir Akbar Khan, where foreign diplomats, aid agency workers and journalists based here live. Two rockets punched their way into the concrete structure, landing in the room where the mother and her young family were settling down for a night's sleep, relatives said.

A six-year old boy was left paraplegic by the blast in which his spinal cord was shattered by a jagged piece of shrapnel.

Egypt's journalists approve press law

CAIRO (R) — Egyptian journalists approved after a stormy meeting Sunday a draft for a new press law to replace one approved by the government last May which they said violated freedom of expression.

Trucks carrying anti-riot police surrounded the journalists' union downtown headquarters as hundreds gathered for their fourth meeting since the crisis erupted to discuss means of forcing the government to cancel the controversial law.

Many speakers accused the government of wasting time

and breaking a promise that a committee which President Hosni Mubarak formed in July to draft a new press legislation would finish its work in three months.

Mr. Mubarak agreed to form the committee made up of legal experts and journalists as a compromise to calm the anger over the new press law.

The head of the journalists' union and pro-government writer, Ibrahim Nafie, said he hoped the union's draft press law would be adopted by the government-formed committee.

Court refuses Vanunu request to go to Rome

JERUSALEM (R) — Israel's supreme court rejected on Sunday a request by jailed technician Mordchai Vanunu to return to Rome where secret agents seized him in 1986 for passing secrets to a British newspaper, army radio said.

Israeli radio stations said journalists were barred as Mr. Vanunu entered the Jerusalem courtroom escorted by dozens of guards.

After the closed-door hearing, he was returned to his cell in a prison in Ashkelon, southern Israel. A justice ministry spokeswoman said the three-judge panel rejected both of his requests. She declined to elaborate.

Army radio said the other request was to cancel the appointment of new Israeli Prime Minister Shimon Peres, who as prime minister in 1986 ordered Mr. Vanunu's kidnapping from Rome to Israel.

Foreign reports said Mr. Vanunu was lured to Rome from London by a beautiful blonde Israeli secret agent named Cindy.

Mr. Vanunu has been in isolation since his conviction for espionage and treason at a secret trial. A court sentenced him to 18 years in jail in 1986 for giving the London Sunday Times smuggled photos of Israel's Dimona nuclear complex.

COLUMN

'Antarctic snow polluted by nuclear fallout'

TOKYO (AFP) — Antarctic snow that fell in 1968 was heavily polluted with the radioactive substance tritium, presumably due to four U.S. atmospheric nuclear tests in 1963, a press report said Sunday. The Tokyo-based National Institute of Polar Research found the level of tritium in the 1964 layer of Antarctic snow at 500 times usual concentrations, the newspaper Mainichi reported. The finding has substantiated the theory that atmospheric nuclear testing in the Northern Hemisphere affected the entire globe, the newspaper said. Tritium is a radioactive isotope of hydrogen with atoms three times the mass of ordinary light hydrogen atoms. It is released by nuclear blasts. The newspaper said scientists from the institute took snow samples from 1985 to 1991 on trips between the Japanese Antarctic base camp of Showa and an outpost some 1,000 kilometres (625 miles) to the south. They dug five metres (16.7 feet) into the snow near the dome to take samples dating back about half a century. The samples dating to the 1960s and earlier showed tritium concentrations of less than 10 TU (tritium unit), or the level expected in the normal atmosphere. But the 1963 samples registered about 50 TU and the 1964 samples 1,500 TU. The level fell back to normal in the 1970s, the newspaper said. The 1964 samples of snow were collected in 1985 and it was presumed to have registered 5,000 TU when it fell from the sky, according to estimates based on the process of tritium disintegration. Mainichi said.

Oldest mom planning for another baby

LONDON (AP) — An Italian woman who set an apparent record by giving birth at 62 is planning to beat that by giving birth again at 64, a British newspaper reported Sunday. Rosanna Della Corte gave birth to a baby boy in July, 1994, at age 62, which is believed to be the world age record for giving birth. That birth was supervised by controversial Rome Doctor Severino Antinori, who arranged the artificial insemination with her husband's sperm and a donor's egg. Dr. Antinori, who has not yet operated on Mrs. Della Corte, said he planned a birth for next year when she is 64. Mrs. Della Corte, who named her son Riccardo after a teenage son who had died in an accident three years earlier, told the Sunday Express she wanted another child "so that when I and my husband die, Riccardo will not grow up alone." European politicians have said the idea of 18-year-olds with 80-year-old mothers is unacceptable, and Germany, Italy and France have banned advanced-age births in reaction to Dr. Antinori's work. "I have chosen England because it accepts the new research I do and it is a very open and intellectual place," Dr. Antinori told the Express. Dr. Antinori set the previous record by supervising the birth of twins to a 59-year-old British woman on Christmas Day, 1993. That birth prompted then-Health Secretary Virginia Bottomley to propose setting an age limit for mothers, and some British politicians still hope to do so.

British madness for Christmas cards soars

LONDON (AFP) — Britain's fetish for Christmas cards is hitting record levels, with Royal Mail handling 1.9 billion cards this year, or 70 million more than last year, postal officials said. That works out to more than 32 cards for every man, woman and child in Britain, including 750,000 addressed to Santa Claus, weighing a total of 29,000 tonnes. Not content just to sell stamps for all those cards, Royal Mail is offering to take back Christmas cards after the holidays, then sell them to paper recycling outfits for £10 (\$15) a tonne. That is half the market price for waste paper, with the proceeds going to forest conservation.